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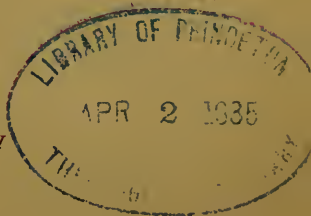
*Editor of "The Expositor"*

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

BY

G. T. STOKES, D.D.

VOLUME II



NEW YORK

A. C. ARMSTRONG AND SON

51 EAST TENTH STREET

1892

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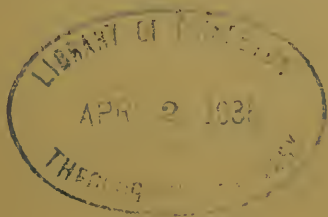
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THE  
ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

BY THE REV.

G. T. STOKES, D.D.

PROFESSOR OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN  
AND VICAR OF ALL SAINTS', BLACKROCK



VOLUME II

NEW YORK  
A. C. ARMSTRONG AND SON  
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1892



## P R E F A C E.

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THE following volume terminates my survey and exposition of the Acts of the Holy Apostles. I have fully explained in the body of this work the reasons which led me to discuss the latter portion of that book more briefly than its earlier chapters. I did this of set purpose. The latter chapters of Acts are occupied to a great extent with the work of St. Paul during a comparatively brief period, while the first twenty chapters cover a space of well-nigh thirty years. The riot in Jerusalem and a few speeches at Cæsarea occupy the larger portion of the later narrative, and deal very largely with circumstances in St. Paul's life, his conversion and mission to the Gentiles, of which the earlier portion of this volume treats at large. Upon these topics I had nothing fresh to say, and was therefore necessarily obliged to refer my readers to pages previously written. I do not think, however, that I have omitted any topic or passage suitable to the purposes of the *Expositor's Bible*. Some may desiderate longer notices of German theories concerning the origin and character of the Acts. But, then, an expositor's Bible is not intended to deal at length with

critical theories. Critical commentaries and works like Dr. Salmon's *Introduction to the New Testament* take such subjects into consideration and discuss them fully, omitting all mere exposition. My duty is exposition, and the supply or indication of material suitable for expository purposes. If I had gone into the endless theories supplied by German ingenuity to explain what seems to us the simplest and plainest matters of fact demanding no explanation whatsoever, I am afraid there would have been little space left for exposition, and my readers would have been excessively few. Those who are interested in such discussions, which are simply endless, and will last as long as man's fancy and imagination continue to flourish, will find ample satisfaction in the eighteenth chapter of Dr. Salmon's *Introduction*. Perhaps I had better notice one point urged by him, as an illustration of the critical methods of English common sense. German critics have tried to make out that the Acts were written in the second century in order to establish a parallel between St. Peter and St. Paul when men wished to reconcile and unite in one common body the Pauline and Petrine parties. This is the view set forth at length by Zeller in his work on the Acts, vol. ii., p. 278, translated and published in the series printed some years ago under the auspices of the Theological Translation Fund. Dr. Salmon's reply seems to me conclusive, as contained in the following passage, *l.c.*, p. 336: "What I think proves conclusively that the making a parallel between Peter and Paul was not an idea present to the author's



mind, is the absence of the natural climax of such a parallel—the story of the martyrdom of both the Apostles. Very early tradition makes both Peter and Paul close their lives by martyrdom at Rome—the place where Rationalist critics generally believe the Acts to have been written. The stories told in tolerably ancient times in that Church which venerated with equal honour the memory of either apostle, represented both as joined in harmonious resistance to the impostures of Simon Magus. And though I believe these stories to be more modern than the latest period to which any one has ventured to assign the Acts, yet what an opportunity did that part of the story which is certainly ancient—that both Apostles came to Rome and died there for the faith (Clem. Rom., 5)—offer to any one desirous of blotting out the memory of all differences between the preaching of Peter and Paul, and of setting both on equal pedestals of honour ! Just as the names of Ridley and Latimer have been united in the memory of the Church of England, and no count has been taken of their previous doctrinal differences, in the recollection of their first testimony for their common faith, so have the names of Peter and Paul been constantly bound together by the fact that the martyrdom of both has been commemorated on the same day. And if the object of the author of the Acts had been what has been supposed, it is scarcely credible that he could have missed so obvious an opportunity of bringing his book to its most worthy conclusion, by telling how the two servants of Christ—

all previous differences, if there had been any, reconciled and forgotten—joined in witnessing a good confession before the tyrant emperor, and encouraged each other to steadfastness in endurance to the end.”

But though I have not dealt in any formal way with the critical theories urged concerning the Acts, I have taken every opportunity of pointing out the evidence for its early date and genuine character furnished by that particular line of historical exposition and illustration which I have adopted. It will be at once seen how much indebted I am in this department to the researches of modern scholars and travellers, especially to those of Professor Ramsay, whose long residence and extended travels in Asia Minor have given him special advantages over all other critics. I have made a diligent use of all his writings, so far as they had appeared up to the time of writing, and only regret that I was not able to use his paper on St. Paul's second journey, which appeared in the *Expositor* for October, after this work had been composed and printed. That article seems to me another admirable illustration of the critical methods used by our own home scholars as contrasted with those current abroad. Professor Ramsay does not set to work to spin criticisms out of his own imagination and elaborate theories out of his own inner consciousness even as a spider weaves its web ; but he takes the Acts of the Apostles, compares it with the facts of Asia Minor, its scenery, roads, mountains, ruins, and then points out how exactly the text answers to the facts, showing that the author of

it wrote at the time alleged and must have been an eyewitness of the Apostles' doings. While again by a similar comparison in the case of the apocryphal acts of St. Paul and Thecla he demonstrates how easily a forger fell into grievous mistakes. I do not think a better illustration can be found of the difference between sound historical criticism and criticism based on mere imagination than this article by Professor Ramsay.

In conclusion I ought to explain that I systematically quote the Fathers whenever I can out of the translations published by Messrs. T. & T. Clark, or in the Oxford Library of the Fathers. It would have been very easy for me to give this book a very learned look by adding the references in Greek or Latin, but I do not think I should have thus conduced much to its practical utility. The Fathers are now a collection of works much spoken of, but very little read, and the references in the original added to theological works are much more overlooked than consulted. It would conduce much to a sound knowledge of primitive antiquity were the works translated of all the Christian writers who flourished down to the triumph of Christianity. Authors who fill their pages with quotations in Latin and Greek which they do not translate forget one simple fact, that ten or twenty years in a country parish immersed in its endless details make the Latin and Greek of even good scholars somewhat rusty. And if so, what must be the case with those who are not good scholars, or not scholars at all, whether bad or good? I am often surprised noting

how much more exacting from their readers modern scholars are in this direction than our forefathers of two hundred years ago. Let any one, for instance, take up the works composed in English by Hammond or Thorndike discussing the subject of Episcopacy, and it will be found that in every case when they use a Latin, Greek, or Hebrew quotation while they give the original they always add the translation. Finally I have to acknowledge, what every page will show, the great assistance I have derived from the Lives of St. Paul written by Archdeacon Farrar, Mr. Lewin, and Messrs. Conybeare & Howson, and to express a hope that this volume together with the previous one will be found helpful by some as they strive to form a better and truer conception of the manner in which the Church of the living God was founded and built up amongst men.

GEORGE T. STOKES.

ALL SAINTS' VICARAGE, BLACKROCK,

*Nov. 4th, 1892.*

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## CHAPTER I.

### *THE TRAINING OF SAUL THE RABBI.*

“A young man named Saul.”—ACTS vii. 58.

“I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, at the feet of Gamaliel, instructed according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God, even as ye all are this day.”—ACTS xxii. 3.

THE appearance of St. Paul upon the stage of Christian history marks a period of new development and of more enlarged activity. The most casual reader of the Acts of the Apostles must see that a personality of vast power, force, individuality, has now entered the bounds of the Church, and that henceforth St. Paul, his teaching, methods, and actions, will throw all others into the shade. Modern German critics have seized upon this undoubted fact and made it the foundation on which they have built elaborate theories concerning St. Paul and the Acts of the Apostles. Some of them have made St. Paul the inventor of a new form of Christianity, more elaborate, artificial, and dogmatic than the simple religion of nature which, as they think, Jesus Christ taught. Others have seen in St. Paul the great rival and antagonist of St. Peter, and have seen in the Acts a deliberate attempt to reconcile the opposing factions of Peter and Paul by representing St. Paul's career as modelled upon that of Peter's.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See this portion of Baur's theory refuted in Dr. Salmon's *Intro*.  
VOL. II.

These theories are, we believe, utterly groundless ; but they show at the same time what an important event in early Church history St. Paul's conversion was, and how necessary a thorough comprehension of his life and training if we wish to understand the genesis of our holy religion.

Who and whence, then, was this enthusiastic man who is first introduced to our notice in connexion with St. Stephen's martyrdom ? What can we glean from Scripture and from secular history concerning his earlier career ? I am not going to attempt to do what Conybeare and Howson thirty years ago, or Archdeacon Farrar in later times, have executed with a wealth of learning and a profuseness of imagination which I could not pretend to possess. Even did I possess them it would be impossible, for want of space, to write such a biography of St. Paul as these authors have given to the public. Let us, however, strive to gather up such details of St. Paul's early life and training as the New Testament, illustrated by history, sets before us. Perhaps we shall find that more is told us than strikes the ordinary superficial reader. His parentage is known

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*duction to the New Testament*, ch. xviii., p. 335, 4th ed., where the writer admits a certain parallelism between the history of SS. Peter and Paul in the Acts, but denies that it was an invented parallelism. He remarks on the next page, "What I think proves decisively that the making a parallel between St. Peter and St. Paul was not an idea present to the author's mind is the absence of the natural climax of such a parallel—the story of the martyrdom of both the Apostles. . . . If the object of the author of the Acts had been what has been supposed, it is scarcely credible that he could have missed so obvious an opportunity of bringing his book to its most worthy conclusion, by telling how the two servants of Christ—all previous differences, if there had been any, reconciled and forgotten—joined in witnessing a good confession before the tyrant emperor, and encouraged each other in steadfastness in endurance to the end."

to us from St. Paul's own statement. His father and mother were Jews of the Dispersion, as the Jews scattered abroad amongst the Gentiles were usually called; they were residents at Tarsus in Cilicia, and by profession belonged to the Pharisees who then formed the more spiritual and earnest religious section of the Jewish people. We learn this from three passages. In his defence before the Council, recorded in Acts xxiii. 6, he tells us that he was "a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees." There was no division in religious feeling between the parents. His home life and his earliest years knew nothing of religious jars and strife. Husband and wife were joined not only in the external bonds of marriage, but in the profounder union still of spiritual sentiment and hope, a memory which may have inspired a deeper meaning begotten of personal experience in the warning delivered to the Corinthians, "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers." Of the history of his parents and ancestors we know practically nothing more for certain, but we can glean a little from other notices. St. Paul tells us that he belonged to a special division among the Jews, of which we have spoken a good deal in the former volume when dealing with St. Stephen. The Jews at this period were divided into Hebrews and Hellenists: that is, Hebrews who by preference and in their ordinary practice spoke the Hebrew tongue, and Hellenists who spoke Greek and adopted Greek civilisation and customs. St. Paul tells us in Philippians iii. 5 that he was "of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews," a statement which he substantially repeats in 2 Corinthians xi. 22. Now it was almost an impossibility for a Jew of the Dispersion to belong to the Hebrews. His lot was cast in a foreign land, his

business mixed him up with the surrounding pagans, so that the use of the Greek language was an absolute necessity; while the universal practice of his fellow-countrymen in conforming themselves to Greek customs, Greek philosophy, and Greek civilisation rendered the position of one who would stand out for the old Jewish national ideas and habits a very trying and a very peculiar one. Here, however, comes in an ancient tradition, recorded by St. Jerome, which throws some light upon the difficulty. Scripture tells us that St. Paul was born at Tarsus. Our Lord, in His conversation with Ananias in Acts ix. 11, calls him "Saul of Tarsus," while again the Apostle himself in the twenty-second chapter describes himself as "a Jew born in Tarsus. But then the question arises, how came his parents to Tarsus, and how, being in Tarsus, could they be described as Hebrews while all around and about them their countrymen were universally Hellenists? St. Jerome here steps in to help us. He relates, in his *Catalogue of Illustrious Writers*, that "Paul the Apostle, previously called Saul, being outside the number of the Twelve, was of the tribe of Benjamin and of the city of the Jewish Gischala; on the capture of which by the Romans he migrated with them to Tarsus." Now this statement of Jerome, written four hundred years after the event, is clearly inaccurate in many respects, and plainly contradicts the Apostle's own words that he was born in Tarsus.

But yet the story probably embodies a tradition substantially true, that St. Paul's parents were originally from Galilee. Galilee was intensely Hebrew. It was provincial, and the provinces are always far less affected by advance in thought or in religion than the towns, which are the chosen homes of innovation and of

progress. Hellenism might flourish in Jerusalem, but in Galilee it would not be tolerated ; and the tough, sturdy Galileans alone would have moral and religious grit enough to maintain the old Hebrew customs and language, even amid the abounding inducements to an opposite course which a great commercial centre like Tarsus held out. Assuredly our own experience affords many parallels illustrating the religious history of St. Paul's family. The Evangelical revival, the development of Ritual in the Church of England, made their mark first of all in the towns, and did not affect the distant country districts till long after. The Presbyterianism of the Highlands is almost a different religion from the more enlightened and more cultured worship of Edinburgh and Glasgow. The Low Church and Orange developments of Ulster bring us back to the times of the last century, and seem passing strange to the citizens of London, Manchester, or Dublin, who first make their acquaintance in districts where obsolete ideas and cries still retain a power quite forgotten in the vast tide of life and thought which sways the great cities. And yet these rural backwaters, as we may call them, retain their influence, and show strong evidence of life even in the great cities ; and so it is that even in London and Edinburgh and Glasgow and Dublin congregations continue to exist in their remoter districts and back streets where the prejudices and ideas of the country find full sway and exercise. The Presbyterianism of the Highlands and the Orangeism of Ulster will be sought in vain in fashionable churches, but in smaller assemblies they will be found exercising a sway and developing a life which will often astonish a superficial observer.

So it was doubtless in Tarsus. The Hebrews of



Galilee would delight to separate themselves. They would look down upon the Hellenism of their fellow-countrymen as a sad falling away from ancient orthodoxy, but their declension would only add a keener zest to the zeal with which the descendants of the Hebrews of Gischala, even in the third and fourth generations, as it may have been, would retain the ancient customs and language of their Galilean forefathers.<sup>1</sup>

St. Paul and his parents might seem to an outsider mere Hellenists, but their Galilean origin and training enabled them to retain the intenser Judaism which

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<sup>1</sup> The tradition mentioned by St. Jerome is not the only one which deals with the early life of St. Paul. Another very learned writer of the same, or perhaps we should rather say of a still earlier, period was St. Epiphanius, the historian of Heresies and bishop of Constantia, or Salamis, in Cyprus. He wrote a great work describing the various heresies which had sprung up in the Church, containing much valuable information which his research and early date enabled him to incorporate in his pages. He describes, amongst others, the Ebionites, telling us of their hostility to St. Paul and of the charges they brought against him. The Ebionites denied that he was a Jew at all. The words of Epiphanius are "They say that he was a Greek, and sprung from the Gentiles, and then afterwards became a proselyte," in opposition to which he quotes the Apostle's own words in Phil. iii. 5 and in 2 Cor. xi. 22. Epiphanius then proceeds to explain how St. Paul might have been born in Tarsus and yet have been a Jew by nation, because that, under Antiochus Epiphanes and at other times, vast numbers of the Jews had been dispersed as captives among the Gentiles. See Epiphanius, in *Corpus Hæreseologicum*, Ed. Oehler, vol. ii., p. 283. Berlin, 1859. This is a good instance how the Jewish hostility, which pursued St. Paul through life, had not quite died out three centuries later. Epiphanius was born about A.D. 310. He wrote his work on Early Heresies about A.D. 375, calling it *Panarion*, or, as he himself explains in his introductory epistle, the Medicine Chest, full of remedies against the bite of the Old Serpent. Epiphanius must have had a great store of early literature at his command which has now completely perished. See a long and critical account of him and his writings, written by Dr. R. A. Lipsius, in the *Dict. Christ. Biog.*, vol. ii.



qualified the Apostle to describe himself as not only of the stock of Israel, but as a Hebrew of the Hebrews.

St. Paul's more immediate family connexions have also some light thrown upon them in the New Testament. We learn, for instance, from Acts xxiii. 16, that he had a married sister, who probably lived at Jerusalem, and may have been even a convert to Christianity ; for we are told that her son, having heard of the Jewish plot to murder the Apostle, at once reported it to St. Paul himself, who thereupon put his nephew into communication with the chief captain in whose custody he lay. While again, in Romans xvi. 7, 11, he sends salutations to Andronicus, Junias, and Herodion, his kinsmen, who were residents in Rome ; and in verse 21 of the same chapter joins Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, his kinsmen, with himself in the Christian wishes for the welfare of the Roman Church, with which he closes the Epistle. It is said, indeed, that this may mean simply that these men were Jews, and that St. Paul regarded all Jews as his kinsmen. But this notion is excluded by the form of the twenty-first verse, where he first sends greetings from Timothy, whom St. Paul dearly loved, and who was a circumcised Jew, not a proselyte merely, but a true Jew, on his mother's side, at least ; and then the Apostle proceeds to name the persons whom he designates his kinsmen. St. Paul evidently belonged to a family of some position in the Jewish world, whose ramifications were dispersed into very distant quarters of the empire. Every scrap of information which we can gain concerning the early life and associations of such a man is very precious ; we may therefore point out that we can even get a glimpse of the friends and acquaintances of his earliest days. Barnabas the Levite

was of Cyprus, an island only seventy miles distant from Tarsus. In all probability Barnabas may have resorted to the Jewish schools of Tarsus, or may have had some other connexions with the Jewish colony of that city. Some such early friendship may have been the link which bound Paul to Barnabas and enabled the latter to stand sponsor for the newly converted Saul when the Jerusalem Church was yet naturally suspicious of him. "And when he was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: and they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles" (Acts ix. 26, 27). This ancient friendship enabled Barnabas to pursue the Apostle with those offices of consolation which his nascent faith demanded. He knew Saul's boyhood haunts, and therefore it is we read in Acts xi. 25 that "Barnabas went forth to Tarsus to seek for Saul" when a multitude of the Gentiles began to pour into the Church of Antioch. Barnabas knew his old friend's vigorous, enthusiastic character, his genius, his power of adaptation, and therefore he brought him back to Antioch, where for a whole year they were joined in one holy brotherhood of devout and successful labour for their Master. The friendships and love of boyhood and of youth received a new consecration and were impressed with a loftier ideal from the example of Saul and of Barnabas.

Then again there are other friends of his youth to whom he refers. Timothy's family lived at Lystra, and Lystra was directly connected with Tarsus by a great road which ran straight from Tarsus to Ephesus, offering means for that frequent communication in which the Jews ever delighted. St. Paul's earliest memories carried him back to the devout atmosphere

of the pious Jewish family at Lystra, which he had long known, where Lois the grandmother and Eunice the mother had laid the foundations of that spiritual life which under St. Paul's own later teaching flourished so wondrously in the life of Timothy.<sup>1</sup> Let us pass on, however, to a period of later development. St. Paul's earliest teaching at first was doubtless that of the home. As with Timothy so with the Apostle; his earliest religious teacher was doubtless his mother, who from his infancy imbued him with the great rudimentary truths which lie at the basis of both the Jewish and the Christian faith. His father too took his share. He was a Pharisee, and would be anxious to fulfil every jot and tittle of the law and every minute rule which the Jewish doctors had deduced by an attention and a subtlety concentrated for ages upon the text of the Old Testament. And one great doctor had laid down, "When a boy begins to speak, his father ought to talk with him in the sacred language, and to teach him the law"; a rule which would exactly fall in with his father's natural inclination.<sup>2</sup> He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, though dwelling among Hellenists. He prided himself on speaking the Hebrew language alone, and he therefore would take the greatest pains that the future Apostle's earliest teachings should be in that same sacred tongue, giving him from boyhood that command over Hebrew and its dialects which he afterwards turned to the best of uses.

At five years old Jewish children of parents like

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<sup>1</sup> See 2 Tim. i. 5, and iii. 14, 15. It is evident that St. Paul's language implies an acquaintance with Timothy's family of very long standing.

<sup>2</sup> Schoettgen's *Hor. Hebr.*, vol. i., p. 89; Lewin's *St. Paul*, vol. i., p. 7.

St. Paul's advanced to the direct study of the law under the guidance of some doctor, whose school they daily attended, as another rabbi had expressly enacted, "At five years old a boy should apply himself to the study of Holy Scripture." Between five and thirteen Saul was certainly educated at Tarsus, during which period his whole attention was concentrated upon sacred learning and upon mechanical or industrial training. It was at this period of his life that St. Paul must have learned the trade of tentmaking, which during the last thirty years of his life stood him in such good stead, rendering him independent of all external aid so far as his bodily wants were concerned. A question has often been raised as to the social position of St. Paul's family; and people, bringing their Western ideas with them, have thought that the manual trade which he was taught betokened their humble rank. But this is quite a mistake. St. Paul's family must have occupied at least a fairly comfortable position, when they were able to send a member of their house to Jerusalem to be taught in the most celebrated rabbinical school of the time. But it was the law of that school—and a very useful law it was too—that every Jew, and especially every teacher, should possess a trade by which he might be supported did necessity call for it. It was a common proverb among the Jews at that time that "He who taught not his son a trade taught him to be a thief." "It is incumbent on the father to circumcise his son, to redeem him, to teach him the law, and to teach him some occupation, for, as Rabbi Judah saith, whosoever teacheth not his son to do some work is as if he taught him robbery." "Rabbin Gamaliel saith, He that hath a trade in his hand, to what is he like? He is like to a vineyard that is

fenced." Such was the authoritative teaching of the schools, and Jewish practice was in accordance therewith. Some of the most celebrated rabbis of that time were masters of a mechanical art or trade. The Vice-president of the Sanhedrin was a merchant for four years, and then devoted himself to the study of the law. One rabbi was a shoemaker; Rabbi Juda, the great Cabbalist, was a tailor; Rabbi Jose was brought up as a tanner; another rabbi as a baker, and yet another as a carpenter.<sup>1</sup> And so as a preparation for the office and life work to which his father had destined him, St. Paul during his earlier years was taught one of the common trades of Tarsus, which consisted in making tents either out of the hair or the skin of the Angora goats which browsed over the hills of central Asia Minor. It was a trade that was common among Jews. Aquila and his wife Priscilla were tentmakers, and therefore St. Paul united himself to them and wrought at his trade in their company at Corinth (Acts xviii. 3). It has often been asserted that at this period of his life St. Paul must have studied Greek philosophy and literature, and men have pointed to his quotations from the Greek poets Aratus, Epimenides, and Menander to prove the attention

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<sup>1</sup> Josephus, *Antiqq.*, XVIII., ix., 1, says of certain Jews of Babylon, "Now there were two men, Asineus and Anileus, brethren to one another. They were destitute of a father, and their mother put them to learn the art of weaving curtains, it not being esteemed a disgrace among them for men to be weavers of cloth." Then we find in the New Testament Simon of Joppa was a tanner, Aquila a tentmaker, the apostles fishermen, and our Lord a carpenter. See a long note on this subject by Mr. Lewin in his *Life of St. Paul*, vol. i., p. 8. Mas-sutius, a Jesuit commentator on St. Paul's life, lib. i., cap. iii., notices that Charlemagne, according to his biographer Eginhard, would have his sons and daughters taught some mechanical trade.

which the Apostle must have bestowed upon them.<sup>1</sup> Tarsus was certainly one of the great universities of that age, ranking in the first place along with Athens and Alexandria. So great was its fame that the Roman emperors even were wont to go to Tarsus to look for tutors to instruct their sons. But Tarsus was at the very same time one of the most morally degraded spots within the bounds of the Roman world, and it is not at all likely that a strict Hebrew, a stern Pharisee, would have allowed his son to encounter the moral taint involved in freely mixing with such a degraded people and in the free study of a literature permeated through and through with sensuality and idolatry. St. Paul doubtless at this early period of his life gained that colloquial knowledge of Greek which was every day becoming more and more necessary for the ordinary purposes of secular life all over the Roman Empire, even in the most backward parts of Palestine.<sup>2</sup> But it is not likely that his parents would have sanctioned his attendance at the lectures on philosophy and poetry delivered at the University of Tarsus, where he would have been initiated into all the abominations of paganism in a style most attractive to human nature.

At thirteen years of age, or thereabouts, young Saul, having now learned all the sacred knowledge which the local rabbis could teach, went up to Jerusalem just as our Lord did, to assume the full obligations of a Jew and to pursue his higher studies at the

<sup>1</sup> See Acts xvii. 28; Titus i. 12; 1 Cor. xv. 33.

<sup>2</sup> See an article on "Greek the Language of Galilee in the time of Christ," by the Rev. Dr. Abbott, Professor of Hebrew in the University of Dublin, in his *Essays chiefly on the Original Texts of the Old and New Testaments*. London, 1891.

great Rabbinical University of Jerusalem. To put it in modern language, Saul went up to Jerusalem to be confirmed and admitted to the full privileges and complete obligations of the Levitical Law, and he also went up to enter college. St. Paul himself describes the period of life on which he now entered as that in which he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. We have already touched in a prior volume upon the subject of Gamaliel's history and his relation to Christianity, but here it is necessary to say something of him as a teacher, in which capacity he laid the foundations of modes of thought and reasoning, the influence of which moulded St. Paul's whole soul and can be traced all through St. Paul's Epistles.

Gamaliel is an undoubtedly historical personage. The introduction of him in the Acts of the Apostles is simply another instance of that marvellous historical accuracy which every fresh investigation and discovery show to be a distinguishing feature of this book. The Jewish Talmud was not committed to writing for more than four centuries after Gamaliel's time,<sup>1</sup> and yet it presents Gamaliel to us in exactly the same light as the inspired record does, telling us that "with the death of Gamaliel I. the reverence for the Divine law ceased, and the observance of purity and abstinence departed." Gamaliel came of a family distinguished in Jewish

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<sup>1</sup> Basnage, in his *History of the Jews*, translated by Thomas Taylor, Book III., ch. vi., p. 168 (London, 1708), states, "It is agreed by the generality of Jewish and Christian doctors that the Talmud was completed in the 505th year of the Christian Æra." Cf. Serarius, *De Rabbiniis*, Lib. I., c. ix., p. 251; Bartolucci, *Bibl. Rabbin.*, t. i., p. 488, t. iii., p. 359; Mörinus, *Exerc. Bibl.*, Lib. II., ex. 6, c. ii. and iii., p. 294. Schaff's *Encyclopædia of Historical Theology*, vol. iii., pp. 2292-96, has a good article on the Talmud, giving a long list of authorities to which reference may be made by any one interested in this subject.



history both before and after his own time. He was of the royal House of David, and possessed in this way great historical claims upon the respect of the nation. His grandfather Hillel and his father Simeon were celebrated teachers and expounders of the law. His grandfather had founded indeed one of the leading schools of interpretation then favoured by the rabbis. His father Simeon is said by some to have been the aged man who took up the infant Christ in his arms and blessed God for His revealed salvation in the words of the *Nunc Dimittis*; while, as for Gamaliel himself, his teaching was marked by wisdom, prudence, liberality, and spiritual depth so far as such qualities could exist in a professor of rabbinical learning. Gamaliel was a friend and contemporary of Philo, and this fact alone must have imported an element of liberality into his teaching. Philo was a widely read scholar who strove to unite the philosophy of Greece to the religion of Palestine, and Philo's ideas must have permeated more or less into some at least of the schools of Jerusalem, so that, though St. Paul may not have come in contact with Greek literature in Tarsus, he may very probably have learned much about it in a Judaised, purified, spiritualised shape in Jerusalem. But the influence exercised on St. Paul by Gamaliel and through him by Philo, or men of his school, can be traced in other respects.<sup>1</sup>

The teaching of Gamaliel was as spiritual, I have said, as rabbinical teaching could have been; but this is not saying very much from the Christian point of

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<sup>1</sup> Philo is the subject of a very long and learned article by Dr. Edersheim in Smith's *Dict. Christ. Biog.*, vol. iv., with which may be compared a shorter article in Schaff's *Encyclopædia of Hist. Theol.*, vol. ii.



view. The schools at Jerusalem in the time of Gamaliel were wholly engaged in studies of the most wearisome, narrow, petty, technical kind. Dr. Farrar has illustrated this subject with a great wealth of learning and examples in the fourth chapter of his *Life of St. Paul*. The Talmud alone shows this, throwing a fearful light upon the denunciations of our Lord as regards the Pharisees, for it devotes a whole treatise to washings of the hands, and another to the proper method of killing fowls. The Pharisaic section of the Jews held, indeed, that there were two hundred and forty-eight commandments and three hundred and sixty-five prohibitions involved in the Jewish Law, all of them equally binding, and all of them so searching that if only one solitary Jew could be found who for one day kept them all and transgressed in no one direction, then the captivity of God's people would cease and the Messiah would appear.<sup>1</sup>

I am obliged to pass over this point somewhat rapidly, and yet it is a most important one if we desire to know what kind of training the Apostle received; for, no matter how God's grace may descend and the Divine Spirit may change the main directions of a man's life, he never quite recovers himself from the effects of his early teaching. Dr. Farrar has bestowed much time and labour on this point. The following brief extract from his eloquent words will give a vivid idea of the endless puerilities, the infinite questions of pettiest, most minute, and most subtle bearing with which the time of St. Paul and his fellow-students must have been taken up, and which must have made him bitterly feel

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<sup>1</sup> These facts throw much light upon our Lord's words in Matt. xv. 1-9 and xxii. 34-40.

in the depths of his inmost being that, though the law may have been originally intended as a source of life, it had been certainly changed as regards his own particular case, and had become unto him an occasion of death.

“Moreover, was there not mingled with all this nominal adoration of the Law a deeply seated hypocrisy, so deep that it was in a great measure unconscious? Even before the days of Christ the rabbis had learnt the art of straining out gnats and swallowing camels. They had long learnt to nullify what they professed to defend. The ingenuity of Hillel was quite capable of getting rid of any Mosaic regulation which had been found practically burdensome. Pharisees and Sadducees alike had managed to set aside in their own favour, by the devices of the mixtures, all that was disagreeable to themselves in the Sabbath scrupulosity.<sup>1</sup> The fundamental institution of the Sabbatic year had been stultified by the mere legal fiction of the Prosbol.<sup>2</sup> Teachers who were on the high road to a casuistry which could construct

<sup>1</sup> The rabbinical device of mixtures is fully explained in Buxtorf's *Lexicon*, col. 1657, Ed. Basil (1639), or in Kitto's *Biblical Encyclopædia*, under the article “Sabbath.” The Talmud had a special treatise called *Tractatus Mixtorum*, which taught how, for instance, dwellings might be mixed or mingled so as to avoid technical breaches of the Sabbatical law. Planks were laid across intervening residences, so that houses at a very great distance might be brought into touch and connexion, and thus regarded as one common dwelling for a number of people who wished for a common feast on the Sabbath. This was called *Mixtio conclavium*. It was simply one of those wretched devices to which casuistry always leads; something like the rules for banquets on fast days, which we find in Lacroix, *Manners of the Middle Ages*, p. 170, where a most sumptuous Episcopal banquet is described. It was given on a fast day, therefore no flesh is included; but its place was amply supplied by rare fish and other dainties: see G. T. Stokes, *Ireland and Anglo-Norman Church*, p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> Prosbol is simply a transliteration into Hebrew of two Greek words,

rules out of every superfluous particle, had found it easy to win credit for ingenuity by elaborating prescriptions to which Moses would have listened in mute astonishment. If there be one thing more definitely laid down in the Law than another, it is the uncleanness of creeping things ; yet the Talmud assures us that 'no one is appointed a member of the Sanhedrin who does not possess sufficient ingenuity to prove from the written Law that a creeping thing is ceremonially clean'; and that there was an unimpeachable disciple at Jabne who could adduce one hundred and fifty arguments in favour of the ceremonial cleanness of creeping things. Sophistry like this was at work even in the days when the young student of Tarsus sat at the feet of Gamaliel ; and can we imagine any period of his life when he would not have been wearied by a system at once so meaningless, so stringent, and so insincere ? ”

These words are true, thoroughly true, in their extremest sense. Casuistry is at all times a dangerous weapon with which to play, a dangerous science upon which to concentrate one's attention. The mind is so pleased with the fascination of the precipice that one is perpetually tempted to see how near an approach

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πρὸς βουλὴν. The Jewish Law enacted a cancelling of all debts in the Sabbatic year on the part of Jews towards their brethren. This enactment was found to hinder commerce about the time of Hillel—*i.e.*, 75 years B.C. The rich would not lend to the poor on account of the Sabbatical year. So the doctors devised the Prosbol, which was a declaration to the effect that the Sabbatical year was not to affect the debt. There was a legal fiction invented which made void the law. The creditor said to the debtor, “In accordance with the Sabbatical year I remit thee the debt,” and then the debtor replied, “Nevertheless I wish to pay it,” and then the creditor was free from the obligation of Deut. xv.

can be made without a catastrophe, and then the catastrophe happens when it is least expected. But when the casuist's attention is concentrated upon one volume like the law of Moses, interpreted in the thousand methods and combinations open to the luxuriant imagination of the East, then indeed the danger is infinitely increased, and we cease to wonder at the vivid, burning, scorching denunciations of the Lord as He proclaimed the sin of those who enacted that "Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor." St. Paul's whole time must have been taken up in the school of Gamaliel with an endless study of such casuistical trifles; and yet that period of his life left marks which we can clearly trace throughout his writings. The method, for instance, in which St. Paul quotes the Old Testament is thoroughly rabbinical. It was derived from the rules prevalent in the Jewish schools, and therefore, though it may seem to us at times forced and unnatural, must have appeared to St. Paul and to the men of his time absolutely conclusive. When reading the Scriptures we Westerns forget the great difference between Orientals and the nations of Western Europe. Aristotle and his logic and his logical methods, with major and minor premises and conclusions following therefrom, absolutely dominate our thoughts. The Easterns knew nothing of Aristotle, and his methods availed nothing to their minds. They argued in quite a different style, and used a logic which he would have simply scorned. Analogy, allegory, illustration, form the staple elements of Eastern logic, and in their use St. Paul was elaborately trained in Gamaliel's classes, and of their use his writings furnish abundant examples; the most notable of which will be found in

his allegorical interpretation of the events of the wilderness journey of Israel in 1 Corinthians x. 1-4, where the pillar of cloud, and the passage of the Red Sea, and the manna, and the smitten rock become the emblems and types of the Christian Sacraments; and again, in St. Paul's mystical explanation of Galatians iv. 21-31, where Hagar and Sarah are represented as typical of the two covenants, the old covenant leading to spiritual bondage and the new introducing to gospel freedom.<sup>1</sup>

These, indeed, are the most notable examples of St. Paul's method of exegesis derived from the school of

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<sup>1</sup> The parallel between Hagar and Sarah is drawn out at full length after the rabbinical method in Basnage's *History of the Jews* (Taylor's translation), book iii., ch. 22; in Lightfoot's *Galatians*, pp. 178, 179, 189-99, and Farrar's *St. Paul*, ch. iii. Philo in his writings uses the very same illustration. Perhaps it may be well to add the concluding words of Bishop Lightfoot when discussing on p. 197 of his *Galatians*, the similar use made by St. Paul and by Philo of this illustration of Hagar: "At the same time we need not fear to allow that St. Paul's method of teaching here is coloured by his early education in the rabbinical schools. It were as unreasonable to stake the Apostle's inspiration on the turn of a metaphor or the character of an illustration or the form of an argument, as on purity of diction. No one now thinks of maintaining that the language of the inspired writers reaches the classical standard of correctness and elegance, though at one time it was held almost a heresy to deny this. 'A treasure contained in earthen vessels,' 'strength made perfect in weakness,' 'rudeness' in speech, yet not in knowledge,' such is the far nobler conception of inspired teaching, which we may gather from the Apostle's own language. And this language we should do well to bear in mind. But, on the other hand it were mere dogmatism to set up the intellectual standard of our own age or country as an infallible rule. The power of allegory has been differently felt in different ages, as it is differently felt at any one time by diverse nations. Analogy, allegory, metaphor—by what boundaries are these separated the one from the other? What is true or false, correct or incorrect, as an analogy or an allegory? What argumentative force must be assigned to either? We should at least be prepared with an answer to these questions before we venture to sit in judgment on any individual case."

Gamaliel, but there are numberless others scattered all through his writings. If we view them through Western spectacles, we shall be disappointed and miss their force; but if we view them sympathetically, if we remember that the Jews quoted and studied the Old Testament to find illustrations of their own ideas rather than proofs in our sense of the word, studied them as an enthusiastic Shakespeare or Tennyson or Wordsworth student pores over his favourite author to find parallels which others, who are less bewitched, find very slight and very dubious indeed,<sup>1</sup> then we shall come to see how it is that St. Paul quotes an illustration of his doctrine of justification by faith from Habakkuk ii. 4—"The soul of the proud man is not upright, but the just man shall live by his steadfastness"; a passage which originally applied to the Chaldeans and the Jews, predicting that the former should enjoy no stable prosperity, but that the Jews, ideally represented as the just or upright man, should live securely because of their fidelity;<sup>2</sup> and can find an allusion to the resurrection of Christ in "the sure mercies of David," which God had promised to give His people in the third verse of the fifty-fifth of Isaiah.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The latest instance of this method which I have noticed is *Illustrations of Tennyson*, by J. C. Collins, reviewed by the Dean of Armagh in the January number of the *Bookman*, where a number of such parallelisms are quoted which seem to me rather dubious.

<sup>2</sup> Bishop Lightfoot, on Galatians iii. 11, says of this verse, "In its original context the passage has reference to the temporal calamities inflicted by the Chaldean invasion. Here a spiritual meaning and general application are given to words referring primarily to special external incidents." See also Farrar on St. Paul's method of scriptural quotation, in his *Life of St. Paul*, ch. iii.

<sup>3</sup> See St. Paul's address to the Jews of the Pisidian Antioch in Acts xiii. 34. Other specimens of the same rabbinical method used by St. Paul will be found in Rom. iii., iv., and ix. 33; 1 Cor. ix. Eph. iv. 8.

Rabbinical learning, Hebrew discipline, Greek experience and life, these conspired together with natural impulse and character to frame and form and mould a man who must make his mark upon the world at large in whatever direction he chooses for his walk in life. It will now be our duty to show what were the earliest results of this very varied education.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The great leaders in the divine struggle for righteousness, in every great onward movement on behalf of truth have always been men of this varied training. Moses, David, Elijah, Ezra, Saul of Tarsus, were great leaders of thought and action and they were all men whose education had been developed in very various schools. They were not men of books merely, nor men of action alone. They gained the flexibility of mind, the genuine liberality of thought which led them out of the old rucks by experiences gained from very opposite directions. The mere man of books may be very narrow; the practical man, whose knowledge is limited to every day affairs and whose horizon is bounded by to-morrow, is often an unthinking bigot. A man trained like Moses, or David, or Saul is the true leader of men for his mind is trained to receive truths from every quarter.



## CHAPTER II.

### *THE CONVERSION OF THE PERSECUTOR.*

“But Saul laid waste the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.”—ACTS viii. 3.

“But Saul, yet breathing threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and asked of him letters to Damascus unto the synagogues, that if he found any that were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, it came to pass that he drew nigh unto Damascus : and suddenly there shone round about him a light out of heaven : and he fell upon the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And He said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest : but rise, and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.”—ACTS ix. 1-6.

WE have in the last chapter traced the course of St. Paul's life as we know it from his own reminiscences, from hints in Holy Scripture, and from Jewish history and customs. The Jewish nation is exactly like all the nations of the East, in one respect at least. They are all intensely conservative, and though time has necessarily introduced some modifications, yet the course of education, and the force of prejudice, and the power of custom have in the main remained unchanged down to the present time. We now proceed to view St. Paul, not as we imagine his course of life and education to have been, but as we follow him in the exhibition of his active powers, in the full play and



swing of that intellectual energy, of those religious aims and objects for which he had been so long training.

St. Paul at his first appearance upon the stage of Christian history, upon the occasion of St. Stephen's martyrdom, had arrived at the full stature of manhood both in body and in mind. He was then the young man Saul; an expression which enables us to fix with some approach to accuracy the time of his birth. St. Paul's contemporary Philo in one of his works divides man's life into seven periods, the fourth of which is young manhood, which he assigns to the years between twenty-one and twenty-eight. Roughly speaking, and without attempting any fine-drawn distinctions for which we have not sufficient material, we may say that at the martyrdom of St. Stephen St. Paul was about thirty years of age, or some ten years or thereabouts junior to our Lord as His years would have been numbered according to those of the sons of men. One circumstance, indeed, would seem to indicate that St. Paul must have been then over and above the exact line of thirty. It is urged, and that upon the ground of St. Paul's own language, that he was a member of the Sanhedrin. In the twenty-sixth chapter, defending himself before King Agrippa, St. Paul described his own course of action prior to his conversion as one of bitterest hostility to the Christian cause: "I both shut up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, *and when they were put to death, I gave my vote against them*"; an expression which clearly indicates that he was a member of a body and possessed a vote in an assembly which determined questions of life and death, and that could have been nothing else than the Sanhedrin, into which no one was admitted before he had completed thirty years. St. Paul, then, when he is first introduced

to our notice, comes before us as a full-grown man and a well-trained, carefully educated, thoroughly disciplined rabbinical scholar, whose prejudices were naturally excited against the new Galilean sect, and who had given public expression to his feelings by taking decided steps in opposition to its progress. The sacred narrative now sets before us (i) the Conduct of St. Paul in his unconverted state, (ii) his Mission, (iii) his Journey, and (iv) his Conversion. Let us take the many details and circumstances connected with this passage under these four divisions.

I. *The Conduct of Saul.* Here we have a picture of St. Paul in his unconverted state: "Saul, yet breathing threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." This description is amply borne out by St. Paul himself, in which he even enlarges and gives us additional touches of the intensity of his antichristian hate. His ignorant zeal at this period seems to have printed itself deep upon memory's record. There are no less than at least seven different notices in the Acts or scattered through the Epistles, due to his own tongue or pen, and dealing directly with his conduct as a persecutor. No matter how he rejoiced in the fulness and blessedness of Christ's pardon, no matter how he experienced the power and working of God's Holy Spirit, St. Paul never could forget the intense hatred with which he had originally followed the disciples of the Master. Let us note them, for they all bear out, expand, and explain the statement of the passage we are now considering.

In his address to the Jews of Jerusalem as recorded in Acts xxii. he appeals to his former conduct as an evidence of his sincerity. In verses 4 and 5 he says, "I persecuted this Way unto the death, binding and deliver-

ing into prisons both men and women. As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders : from whom also I received letters unto the brethren,<sup>1</sup> and journeyed to Damascus, to bring them also which were there unto Jerusalem in bonds, for to be punished." In the same discourse he recurs a second time to this topic ; for, telling his audience of the vision granted to him in the temple, he says, verse 19, " And I said, Lord, they themselves know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on Thee : and when the blood of Stephen Thy witness was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting, and keeping the garments of them that slew him." St. Paul dwells upon the same topic in the twenty-sixth chapter, when addressing King Agrippa in verses 9-11, a passage already quoted in part : " I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And this I also did in Jerusalem : and I both shut up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, and when they were put to death, I gave my vote against them. And punishing them oftentimes in all the synagogues, I strove to make them blaspheme ; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted

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<sup>1</sup> What an interesting anticipation of Christian times do we find in this passage. " The estate of the elders " is the Presbytery in the original Greek, and the words " the brethren " by which St. Paul refers to his unconverted fellow-countrymen are an anticipation of the expression he always uses for the Christian believers. Even in these little details Christianity is but an expansion of Judaism, as, in another direction, the Catacombs of Rome and the ornamentation used therein were all derived from the customs of the Jewish colony in Rome long before the time of Christ. See a treatise by Schurer, called *Die Gemeindeverfassung der Juden in Rom in der Kaiserzeit*, p. 13 (Leipzig, 1879), where that learned writer points out the continuity between Judaism in Rome and early Christianity.

them even unto foreign cities." It is the same in his Epistles. In four different places does he refer to his conduct as a persecutor—in 1 Cor. xv. 9; Gal. i. 13; Phil. iii. 6; and 1 Tim. i. 13; while again in the chapter now under consideration, the ninth of Acts, we find that the Jews of the synagogue in Damascus, who were listening to St. Paul's earliest outburst of Christian zeal, asked, "Is not this he that in Jerusalem made havock of them which called on this name? and he had come hither for this intent, that he might bring them bound before the chief priests"; using the very same word "making havock" as St. Paul himself uses in the first of Galatians, which in Greek is very strong, expressing a course of action accompanied with fire and blood and murder such as occurs when a city is taken by storm.

Now these passages have been thus set forth at length because they add many details to the bare statement of Acts ix., giving us a glimpse into those four or five dark and bloody years, the thought of which henceforth weighed so heavily upon the Apostle's mind and memory. Just let us notice these additional touches. He shut up in prison many of the saints, both men and women, and that in Jerusalem before he went to Damascus at all. He scourged the disciples in every synagogue, meaning doubtless that he superintended the punishment, as it was the duty of the Chazan, the minister or attendant of the synagogue, to scourge the condemned, and thus strove to make them blaspheme Christ. He voted for the execution of the disciples when he acted as a member of the Sanhedrin. And lastly he followed the disciples and persecuted them in foreign cities. We gain in this way a much fuller idea of the young enthusiast's persecuting zeal

than usually is formed from the words "Saul yet breathing threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," which seem to set forth Saul as roused to wild and savage excitement by St. Stephen's death, and then continuing that course in the city of Jerusalem for a very brief period. Whereas, on the contrary, St. Paul's fuller statements, when combined, represent him as pursuing a course of steady, systematic, and cruel repression, which St. Paul largely helped to inaugurate, but which continued to exist as long as the Jews had the power to inflict corporal punishments and death on the members of their own nation. He visited all the synagogues in Jerusalem and throughout Palestine, scourging and imprisoning. He strove—and this is, again, another lifelike touch,—to compel the disciples to blaspheme the name of Christ in the same manner as the Romans were subsequently wont to test Christians by calling upon them to cry anathema to the name of their Master.<sup>1</sup> He even extended his activity beyond the bounds of the Holy Land, and that in various directions. The visit to Damascus may not by any means have been his first journey to a foreign town with thoughts bent on the work of persecution. He expressly says to Agrippa,

<sup>1</sup> St. Paul, indeed, in his persecuting days may have been the inventor of the test, which seems to have consisted in a declaration that Jesus was not the Christ, but an impostor. We find a reference to the Jewish custom of blaspheming the name of Jesus in the Epistle of James (ii. 6, 7): "Do not the rich oppress you, and themselves drag you before the judgment-seats? Do not they blaspheme the honourable name by the which ye are called?" with which may be compared St. Paul's words in 1 Cor. xii. 3: "No man speaking in the Spirit of God saith, Jesus is anathema." The same custom continued in the second century, as we learn from frequent notices in Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, as in the following quotations: ch. xvi., "cursing in your synagogues those that believe on Christ"; in ch. xlvii. he enumer-

"I persecuted them even unto foreign cities." He may have visited Tarsus, or Lystra, or the cities of Cyprus or Alexandria itself, urged on by the consuming fire of his blind, restless zeal, before he entered upon the journey to Damascus, destined to be the last undertaken in opposition to Jesus Christ. When we thus strive to realise the facts of the case, we shall see that the scenes of blood and torture and death, the ruined homes, the tears, the heartbreaking separations which the young man Saul had caused in his blind zeal for the law, and which are briefly summed up in the words "he made havock of the Church," were quite sufficient to account for that profound impression of his own unworthiness and of God's great mercy towards him which he ever cherished to his dying day.<sup>1</sup>

ates amongst those who shall not be saved "those who have anathematised and do anathematise this very Christ in the synagogues"; and in ch. cxxxvii. he exhorts the Jews, "Assent, therefore, and pour no ridicule on the Son of God; obey not the Pharisaic teachers, and scoff not at the King of Israel, as the rulers of your synagogues teach you to do after your prayers." The Romans, as I have said, early borrowed the custom from the Jews. They strove to compel the Christians to blaspheme, as we see from Pliny's well-known epistle to Trajan in his *Epistles*, book x., 97, where he describes certain persons brought before him as "invoking the gods, worshipping the emperor's statue, and reviling the name of Christ, whereas there is no forcing those who are really Christians into any of these compliances."

<sup>1</sup> St. Paul, in 1 Tim. i. 15, says, "Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." This verse is of ancient and of very modern interest too. It shows that to the last St. Paul retained the keenest sense of his early wickedness. It is of present interest because it helps to correct a modern error. There are people who object to use the Litany and the Lord's Prayer because of the prayers for forgiveness of sins and the occurrence of such expressions as "Have mercy upon us, miserable sinners." Their argument is, that believers have been washed from all their sins, and therefore should not describe themselves as miserable sinners. St. Paul, however, saw no inconsistency between



II. *The Mission of Saul.* Again, we notice in this passage that Saul, having shown his activity in other directions, now turned his attention to Damascus. There were political circumstances which may have hitherto hindered him from exercising the same supervision over the synagogue of Damascus which he had already extended to other foreign cities. The political

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God's free forgiving love and his own humility in designating himself the chief of sinners. God may have cast all our sins behind His back ; but, viewing the matter from the human side, it is well, nay, it is absolutely necessary, if spiritual pride is to be hindered in its rapid growth, for us to cherish a remembrance of the sins and backslidings of other days. The greatest saints, the richest spiritual teachers have ever felt the necessity of it. St. Augustine in his *Confessions* mingles perpetual reminiscences of his own wickedness with his assured sense of God's mercy. Hooker deals in his own profound style with such objection to the Litany in the Fifth Book of his *Ecclesiastical Polity*, ch. xlvii., where he writes, replying to the objection that the expressions of the Litany implying fear of God do not become God's saints : "The knowledge of our own unworthiness is not without belief in the merits of Christ. With that true fear which the one causeth there is coupled true boldness, and encouragement drawn from the other. The very silence which our own unworthiness putteth us unto doth itself make request for us, and that in the consequence of His grace. Looking inward we are stricken dumb, looking upward we speak and prevail. O happy mixture, wherein things contrary do so qualify and correct the danger of the other's excess, that neither boldness can make us presume as long as we are kept under with the sense of our own wretchedness ; nor while we trust in the mercy of God through Jesus Christ, fear be able to tyrannise over us ! As therefore our fear excludeth not that boldness which becometh saints ; so if their familiarity with God (referring to his opponents) do not savour of this fear, it draweth too near that irreverent confidence wherewith true humility can never stand." Bishop Jeremy Taylor understood the bearing of St. Paul's view on personal religion. In his *Holy Living*, in the chapter on Humility, he teaches those who seek that grace thus : "Every day call to mind some one of thy foulest sins, or the most shameful of thy disgraces, or the indiscreetest of thy actions, or anything that did then most trouble thee, and apply it to the present swelling of thy spirit and opinion, and it may help to allay it."

history and circumstances of Damascus at this period are indeed rather obscure. The city seems to have been somewhat of a bone of contention between Herod Antipas, Aretas the king of Petra, and the Romans. About the time of St. Paul's conversion, which may be fixed at A.D. 37 or 38, there was a period of great disturbance in Palestine and Southern Syria. Pontius Pilate was deposed from his office and sent to Rome for judgment. Vitellius, the president of the whole Province of Syria, came into Palestine, changing the high priests, conciliating the Jews, and intervening in the war which raged between Herod Antipas and Aretas, his father-in-law. In the course of this last struggle Damascus seems to have changed its masters, and, while a Roman city till the year 37, it henceforth became an Arabian city, the property of King Aretas, till the reign of Nero, when it again returned beneath the Roman sway. Some one or other, or perhaps all these political circumstances combined may have hitherto prevented the Sanhedrin from taking active measures against the disciples at Damascus. But now things became settled. Caiaphas was deposed from the office of high priest upon the departure of Pontius Pilate. He had been a great friend and ally of Pilate; Vitellius therefore deprived Caiaphas of his sacred office, appointing in his stead Jonathan, son of Annas, the high priest. This Jonathan did not, however, long continue to occupy the position, as he was deposed by the same Roman magistrate, Vitellius, at the feast of Pentecost in the very same year, his brother Theophilus being appointed high priest in his room; so completely was the whole Levitical hierarchy, the entire Jewish establishment, ruled by the political officers of the Roman state. This Theophilus continued to hold the office for five or



six years, and it must have been to Theophilus that Saul applied for letters unto Damascus authorising him to arrest the adherents of the new religion.<sup>1</sup>

And now a question here arises, How is it that the high priest could exercise such powers and arrest his co-religionists in a foreign town? The answer to this sheds a flood of light upon the state of the Jews of the Dispersion, as they were called. I have already said a little on this point, but it demands fuller discussion.<sup>2</sup> The high priest at Jerusalem was regarded as a kind of head of the whole nation. He was viewed by the Romans as the Prince of the Jews,<sup>3</sup> with whom they could formally treat, and by whom they could manage a nation which, differing from all others in its manners and customs, was scattered all over the world, and often gave much trouble. Julius Cæsar laid down the lines on which Jewish privileges and Roman policy were based, and that half a century before the Christian era. Julius Cæsar had been greatly assisted in his Alexandrian war by the Jewish high priest Hyrcanus, so he issued an edict in the year 47 B.C., which, after reciting the services of Hyrcanus, proceeds thus, "I command that Hyrcanus and his children do retain all the rights of the high priest, whether established by law or accorded by courtesy; and if hereafter any question arise touching the Jewish polity, I desire that the determination thereof be referred to him"; an edict which, confirmed as it was again and

<sup>1</sup> The references for all these changes are given in Lewin's *Fasti*, and in his *Life of St. Paul*, with which Josephus, *Antiqq.*, XVIII., iv., should be compared.

<sup>2</sup> See vol. i., pp. 174-6, 271.

<sup>3</sup> The decree of Julius Cæsar, upon which the Jewish privileges were built, expressly calls the high priest the ethnarch (*ἐθνάρχης*), or ruler, of the Jews. See Josephus, *Antiqq.*, XIV., x., 3.

again, not only by Julius Cæsar, but by several subsequent emperors, gave the high priest the fullest jurisdiction over the Jews, wherever they dwelt, in things pertaining to their own religion.<sup>1</sup> It was therefore in strictest accord with Roman law and custom that, when Saul wished to arrest members of the synagogue at Damascus, he should make application to the high priest Theophilus for a warrant enabling him to effect his purpose.

The description, too, given of the disciples in this passage is very noteworthy and a striking evidence of the truthfulness of the narrative. The disciples were the men of "the Way." Saul desired to bring any of "the Way" found at Damascus to be judged at Jerusalem, because the Sanhedrin alone possessed the right to pass capital sentences in matters of religion. The synagogues at Damascus or anywhere else could flog culprits, and a Jew could get no redress for any such ill-treatment even if he sought it, which would have not been at all likely; but if the final sentence of death were to be passed, the Jerusalem Sanhedrin was the only tribunal competent to entertain such questions.<sup>2</sup> And the persons he desired to hale before

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<sup>1</sup> This point is worked out at great length and with a multitude of references in Lewin's *Life of St. Paul*, ch. iv., vol. i., pp. 44-7. Josephus, in his *Antiquities*, book xiv., ch. x., gives the words of Cæsar's decree. In ch. viii. of the same book he describes the warlike assistance lent by the Jews to Julius Cæsar in his Egyptian campaign.

<sup>2</sup> I know it is a common opinion that the Jews had no power of capital punishment and that the Romans permitted the infliction merely of scourgings and such minor penalties. Lightfoot, in his *Horic Hebraicæ* on Matt. xxvi. 3; John xviii. 31; Acts ix. 2, controverts this view in long and learned notes. The Jews certainly stated to Pilate, according to John xviii. 31, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." But then, on the other hand, the Sanhedrin put St. Stephen to death, and St. Paul tells us that when the saints were put to death he voted against

this awful tribunal were the men of the Way. This was the name by which, in its earliest and purest day, the Church called itself. In the nineteenth chapter and ninth verse we read of St. Paul's labours at Ephesus and the opposition he endured: "But when some were hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude"; while again, in his defence before Felix (xxiv. 14), we read, "But this I confess unto thee, that after the Way which they call a sect, so serve I the God of our fathers." The Revised translation of the New Testament has well brought out the force of the original in a manner that was utterly missed in the Authorised Version, and has

them; showing that the Sanhedrin did put many of the disciples to death. Lightfoot thinks that the Jews merely wished to throw the odium of our Lord's execution upon the Romans, and therefore pleaded their own inability to condemn Him for a capital offence, because of the particular chamber where the Sanhedrin then sat, where it was unlawful to judge a capital crime. The Pharisees, too, joined in the attempt to bring about our Lord's death, and their traditions made them averse to the shedding of Jewish blood by the Sanhedrin. The Sadducees were, however, the dominant party in the year 37, and they had no such scruples. They were always of a cruel and bloodthirsty disposition and stern in their punishments, as Josephus tells us in his *Antiq.*, XX., ix., 1. This was of course the natural result of their material philosophy which regarded man as devoid of any immortal principle. Lightfoot gives instances too (Matt. xxvi. 3) of a priest's daughter burned to death and of a man stoned at Lydda even after the destruction of the city, showing that the Sanhedrin still contrived to exercise capital jurisdiction. The time when Saul set out for Damascus was very favourable from political reasons for any new or unusual assumptions of authority on the part of the Sanhedrin. Vitellius the Prefect was very anxious to be deferential in every way to the Jewish authorities. He had just restored the custody of the high priest's robes to the Sanhedrin and the priests. This may have encouraged them to adopt the fiercest and sternest measures against the new sectaries. As for the minor punishment of flogging, the synagogues in Holland have been known to exercise it so lately as the seventeenth century.

emphasized for us a great truth concerning the early Christians. There was a certain holy intolerance even about the very name they imposed upon the earliest Church. It was the Way, the only Way, the Way of Life. The earliest Christians had a lively recollection of what the Apostles had heard from the mouth of the Master Himself, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life ; no one cometh unto the Father but by Me" ; and so, realising the identity of Christ and His people, realising the continued presence of Christ in His Church, they designated that Church by a term which expressed their belief that in it alone was the road to peace, the sole path of access to God. This name "the Way" expressed their sense of the importance of the truth. Their's was no easy-going religion which thought that it made not the slightest matter what form of belief a man professed. They were awfully in earnest, because they knew of only one way to God, and that was the religion and Church of Jesus Christ. Therefore it was that they were willing to suffer all things rather than that they should lose this Way, or that others should miss it through their default. The marvellous, the intense missionary efforts of the primitive Church find their explanation in this expression, the Way. God had revealed the Way and had called themselves into it, and their great duty in life was to make others know the greatness of this salvation ; or, as St. Paul puts it, "Necessity is laid upon me ; woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel."<sup>1</sup>

The exclusive claims of Christianity are thus early

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<sup>1</sup> The Acts of the Apostles in this respect throws an interesting light upon the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, published a few years ago by Bishop Bryennius, and helps us to fix its early date. That

set forth ; and it was these same exclusive claims which caused Christianity to be so hated and persecuted by the pagans.<sup>1</sup> The Roman Empire would not have so bitterly resented the preaching of Christ, if His followers would have accepted the position with which other religions were contented. The Roman Empire was not intolerant of new ideas in matters of religion. Previous to the coming of our Lord the pagans had welcomed the strange, mystic rites and teaching of Egypt. They accepted from Persia the curious system and worship of Mithras within the first century after Christ's crucifixion. And tradition tells that at least two of the emperors were willing to admit the image of Christ into the Pantheon, which they had consecrated

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important relic of early Christianity never speaks of the followers of the new religion as Christians. It opens by describing the two ways, the way of Life, which is Christianity, and the way of Death. It must therefore have been composed when the memory of the Church's earliest designation, "the Way," was still fresh. By the time of Aristides (A.D. 125) and of Pliny the title "Christians" was the common one both inside and outside the Church.

<sup>1</sup> This sense of the awful importance of Christianity as the Way made the Christians enthusiastic and determined in their efforts to spread their religion. In the earliest apology or defence of Christianity, that of Aristides, which I have fully described in the previous volume of this Commentary, we find this fact openly avowed and gloried in as in the following passage : "As for their servants or handmaids, or their children, if they have any, they persuade them to become Christians for the love they have towards them ; and when they have become so, they call them without distinction brethren." A system so broad as to view all religions as equally important would never have innate force enough to lead a man to become a missionary, and most certainly never would have produced a martyr. Christianity really understood is a very broad religion ; its essential dogmas are very few ; but there is a kind of breadth in religion now fashionable which the early Christians never understood or they would not have acted as they did. Who would have thrown away his life amid the cruellest tortures if it was all the same whether men worshipped Jupiter or Jesus Christ

to the memory of the great and good.<sup>1</sup> But the Christians would have nothing to say or do with such partial honours for their Master. Religion for them was Christ alone or else it was nothing, and that because He alone was the Way. As there was but one God for them, so there was but one Mediator, Christ Jesus.

III. *Saul's Journey.* "As he journeyed, it came to pass that he drew nigh unto Damascus." This is the simple record left us in Holy Writ of this momentous event. A comparison of the sacred record with any of the numerous lives of St. Paul which have been published will show us how very different their points of view. The mere human narratives dwell upon the external features of the scene, enlarge upon the light which modern discoveries have thrown upon the lines of road which connected Jerusalem with Southern Syria, become enthusiastic over the beauty of Damascus as seen by the traveller from Jerusalem, over the eternal green of the groves and gardens which are still, as of old, made glad by the waters of Abana and of Pharpar ; while the sacred narrative passes over all external details and marches straight to the great central fact of the persecutor's conversion. And we find no fault with this. It is well that the human narratives should enlarge as

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<sup>1</sup> Tertullian, about the year 200, tells us (*Apologet.*, ch. v. and xxi.) that the Emperor Tiberius, under whom our Lord suffered, was so moved by Pilate's report of the miracles and resurrection of Christ as to propose a bill to the Senate that Christ should be received among the gods of Rome ; while, as for Emperor Alexander Severus, A.D. 222 to 235, he went even further. In Christ he recognised a Divine Being equal with the other gods ; and in his domestic chapel he placed the bust of Christ along with the images of those men whom he regarded as beings of a superior order—of Apollonius of Tyana, and Orpheus, and such like. Heliogabalus, A.D. 219, is credited with a desire to have blended Christianity with the worship of the Sun : see Neander, *Church History*, vol. i., pp. 128, 173, Bohn's edition.



they do upon the outward features and circumstances of the journey, because they thus help us to realise the Acts as a veritable history that was lived and acted. We are too apt to idealise the Bible, to think of it as dealing with an unreal world, and to regard the men and women thereof as beings of another type from ourselves. Books like Farrar's and Lewin's and Conybeare and Howson's *Lives of St. Paul* correct this tendency, and make the Acts of the Apostles infinitely more interesting by rendering St. Paul's career human and lifelike and clothing it with the charm of local detail. It is thus that we can guess at the very road by which the enthusiastic Saul travelled. The caravans from Egypt to Damascus are intensely conservative in their routes. In fact, even in our own revolutionary West trade and commerce preserve in large measure the same routes to-day as they used two thousand years ago. The great railways of England, and much more the great main roads, preserve in a large degree the same directions which the ancient Roman roads observed. In Ireland, with which I am still better acquainted, I know that the great roads starting from Dublin preserve in the main the same lines as in the days of St. Patrick.<sup>1</sup> And so it is, but only to a much greater degree, in Palestine and throughout the East. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho preserved in St. Jerome's time, four centuries later, the same direction and the same character as in our Lord's day, so that it was then called the Bloody Road, from the frequent robberies; and thus it is still, for the pilgrims who now go to visit the Jordan are furnished with a guard of Turkish soldiers to protect

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<sup>1</sup> See Petrie's "Tara" in the *Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy*, t. xviii., and *Ireland and the Celtic Church*, by G. T. Stokes, pp. 80, 81, for illustrations of this point.

them from the Arab bandits. And to-day, as in the first century, the caravans from Egypt and Jerusalem to Damascus follow either of two roads: one which proceeds through Gaza and Ramleh, along the coast, and then, turning eastward about the borders of Samaria and Galilee, crosses the Jordan and proceeds through the desert to Damascus—that is the Egyptian road;<sup>1</sup> while the other, which serves for travellers from Jerusalem, runs due north from that city and joins the other road at the entrance to Galilee. This latter was probably the road which St. Paul took. The distance which he had to traverse is not very great. One hundred and thirty-six miles separate Jerusalem from Damascus, a journey which is performed in five or six days by such a company as Saul had with him. We get a hint, too, of the manner in which he travelled. He rode probably on a horse or a mule, like modern travellers on the same road, as we gather from Acts ix. 4 compared with xxii. 7, passages which represent Saul and his companions as falling to the earth when the supernatural light flashed upon their astonished vision.

The exact spot where Saul was arrested in his mad career is a matter of some debate; some fix it close to the city of Damascus, half a mile or so from the south gate on the high road to Jerusalem. Dr. Porter, whose long residence at Damascus made him an authority on the locality, places the scene of the conversion at the village of Caucabe, ten miles away, where the traveller from Jerusalem gets his first glimpse of the towers and groves of Damascus. We are not anxious to determine this point. The great spiritual

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<sup>1</sup> See Geikie's *The Holy Land and the Bible*, p. 38.



truth which is the centre and core of the whole matter remains, and that central truth is this, that it was when he drew near to Damascus and the crowning act of violence seemed at hand, then the Lord put forth His power—as He so often still does just when men are about to commit some dire offence—arrested the persecutor, and then, amid the darkness of that abounding light, there rose upon the vision of the astonished Saul at Caucabe, “the place of the star,” that true Star of Bethlehem which never ceased its clear shining for him till he came unto the perfect day.<sup>1</sup>

IV. Lastly we have the actual conversion of the Apostle and the circumstances of it. We have mention made in this connexion of the light, the voice, and the conversation. These leading circumstances are described in exactly the same way in the three great accounts in the ninth, in the twenty-second, and in the twenty-sixth chapters. There are minute differences between them, but only such differences as are natural between the verbal descriptions given at different times by a truthful and vigorous speaker, who, conscious of honest purpose, did not stop to weigh his every word. All three accounts tell of the light; they all agree on that. St. Paul in his speeches at Jerusalem unhesitatingly declares that the light which he beheld was a supernatural one, above the brightness, the fierce, intolerable brightness of a Syrian sun at midday; and boldly asserts that the attendants and escort who were with him saw the light. Those who disbelieve in the supernatural reject, of course, this assertion, and resolve the light into a fainting fit brought upon Saul by the burning

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<sup>1</sup> The question of the site of the conversion is discussed at length in Lewin's *St. Paul*, vol. i., ch. v., p. 49.

heat, or into a passing sirocco blast from the Arabian desert. But the sincere and humble believer may fairly ask, Could a fainting fit or a breath of hot wind change a man who had stood out against Stephen's eloquence and Stephen's death and the witnessed sufferings and patience displayed by the multitudes of men and women whom he had pursued unto the death? But it is not our purpose to discuss these questions in any controversial spirit. Time and space would fail to treat of them aright, specially as they have been fully discussed already in works like Lord Lyttelton on the conversion of St. Paul, wholly devoted to such aspects of these events.<sup>1</sup> But, looking at them from a believer's point of view, we can see good reasons why the supernatural light should have been granted. Next to the life and death and resurrection of our Lord, the conversion of St. Paul was the most important event the world ever saw. Our Lord made to the fiery persecutor a special revelation of Himself in the mode of His existence in the unseen world,

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<sup>1</sup> Lord Lyttelton's *Observations on the Conversion of St. Paul* is a work now almost unknown to ordinary students of the Bible. It was written in the reign of George II. by the Lord Lyttelton of that day famous as a historian and a poet. Dr. Johnson said of it that it is "a treatise to which infidelity has never been able to fabricate a specious answer." It will be found reprinted in a cheap and handy shape by the Religious Tract Society, with a valuable preface by the well-known Henry Rogers. Lord Lyttelton touches upon the subject of the light seen by St. Paul on p. 164, and then adds, "That God should work miracles for the establishment of a most holy religion which, from the insuperable difficulties that stood in the way of it, could not have established itself without such an assistance, is no way repugnant to human reason; but that without any miracles such things (as the light above the brightness of the sun and St. Paul's blindness) should have happened as no adequate natural causes can be assigned for is what human reason cannot believe."

in the reality, truth, and fulness of His humanity, such as He never made to any other human being. The special character of the revelation shows the importance that Christ attached to the person and the personal character of him who was the object of that revelation. Just, then, as we maintain that there was a fitness when there was an Incarnation of God that miracles should attend it ; so, too, when the greatest instrument and agent in propagating a knowledge of that Incarnation was to be converted, it was natural that a supernatural agency should have been employed. And then when the devout mind surveys the records of Scripture how similar we see St. Paul's conversion to have been to other great conversions. Moses is converted from mere worldly thoughts and pastoral labours on which his soul is bent, and sent back to tasks which he had abandoned for forty years, to the great work of freeing the people of God and leading them to the Land of Promise ; and then a vision is granted, where light, a supernatural light, the light of the burning bush, is manifested. Isaiah and Daniel had visions granted to them when a great work was to be done and a great witness had to be borne, and supernatural light and glory played a great part in their cases.<sup>1</sup> When the Lord was born in Bethlehem, and the revelation of the Incarnate God had to be made to humble faith and lowly piety, then the glory of the Lord, a light from out God's secret temple, shone forth to lead the worshippers to Bethlehem. And so, too, in St. Paul's case ; a world's spiritual welfare was at stake, a crisis in the world's spiritual history, a great turning-point in the Divine plan of salvation had arrived, and it was most fitting that the

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<sup>1</sup> See Exod. iii., Isa. vi., and Dan. x.

veil which shrouds the unseen from mortal gaze should be drawn back for a moment, and that not Saul alone but his attendants should stand astonished at the glory of the light above the brightness of the sun which accompanied Christ's manifestation.<sup>1</sup>

Then, again, we have the voice that was heard. Difficulties have been also raised in this direction. In the ninth chapter St. Luke states that the attendant escort "heard a voice"; in the twenty-second chapter St. Paul states "they that were with me beheld indeed the light, but they heard not the voice of Him that spake to me." This inconsistency is, however, a mere surface one. Just as it was in the case of our Lord Himself reported in John xii. 28, 29, where the multitude heard a voice but understood not its meaning, some saying that it thundered, others that an angel had spoken, while Christ alone understood and interpreted it; so it was in St. Paul's case; the escort heard a noise, but the Apostle alone understood the sounds, and for him alone they formed articulate words, by him alone was heard

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<sup>1</sup> Here it may be well to point out that people should not fancy that their own spiritual experience must necessarily be like St. Paul's. Some persons have troubled themselves because they could not say that they had passed exactly through the same religious feelings and struggles as St. Paul's. But as no two leaves are alike and as no two careers are exactly parallel, so no two spiritual experiences are exactly the same. The true course for any individual to adopt is not to strive and see whether God's dealings with himself and the response which his own spirit has made to the Divine Voice have been exactly like those of others. His true course is rather to strive and ascertain whether he is now really following, obeying, and loving God. He may leave all inquiry as to the methods by which God has guided his soul into the paths of peace to be hereafter resolved in the clear light of eternity. Some God awakens, as He did St. Paul, by an awful catastrophe; others grow up before Him from infancy like Samuel and Timothy; others God gradually changes from sin and worldliness to peace and righteousness, like Jacob of old time.

the voice of Him that spake. And the cause of this is explained by St. Paul himself in chapter xxvi., verse 14, where he tells King Agrippa that the voice spake to him in the Hebrew tongue, the ancient Hebrew that is, which St. Paul as a learned rabbinical scholar could understand, but which conveyed no meaning to the members of the temple-police, the servants, and constables of the Sanhedrin who accompanied him.<sup>1</sup> Many other questions have here been raised and difficulties without end propounded, because we are dealing with a region of man's nature and of God's domain, wherewith we have but little acquaintance and to which the laws of ordinary philosophy do not apply. Was the voice which Paul heard, was the vision of Christ granted to him, subjective or objective? is, for instance, one of such idle queries. We know, indeed, that these terms subjective and objective have a meaning for ordinary life. Subjective in such a connexion means that which has its origin, its rise, its existence wholly within man's soul; objective that which comes from without and has its origin outside man's nature. Objective, doubtless, St. Paul's revelation was in this sense. His revelation must have come from outside, or else how do we account for the conversion of the persecuting Sanhedrist, and that in a moment? He had withstood every other influence, and now he yields himself in a moment the

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<sup>1</sup> The Rev. Dr. Abbott, Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, in a learned work, *Biblical Essays*, lately published, pp. 142 and 146, points out that the lower classes of the Jewish population did not understand the ancient Hebrew, a knowledge of which was in his opinion confined to a few scholars. Cf. also p. 168, where he writes, "It deserves to be noticed that for the vast majority of the Palestinians the Greek Bible was the only one accessible. The knowledge of the ancient Hebrew was confined to a few scholars, in addition to which the Hebrew books were extremely expensive."

lifelong willing captive of Christ when no human voice or argument or presence is near. But then, if asked how did he see Christ when he was blinded with the heavenly glory? how did he speak to Christ when even the escort stood speechless? we confess then that we are landed in a region of which we are totally ignorant and are merely striving to intrude into the things unseen. But who is there that will now assert that the human eye is the only organ by which man can see? that the human tongue is the only organ by which the spirit can converse? The investigations of modern psychology have taught men to be somewhat more modest than they were a generation or two ago, when man in his conceit thought that he had gained the very utmost limits of science and of knowledge. These investigations have led men to realise that there are vast tracts of an unknown country, man's spiritual and mental nature, yet to be explored, and even then there must always remain regions where no human student can ever venture and whence no traveller can ever return to tell the tale. But all these regions are subject to God's absolute sway, and vain will be our efforts to determine the methods of his actions in a sphere of which we are well-nigh completely ignorant. For the Christian it will be sufficient to accept on the testimony of St. Paul, confirmed by Ananias, his earliest Christian teacher, that Jesus Christ was seen by him,<sup>1</sup> and that a voice was heard for the first time in the silence of

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<sup>1</sup> There is nothing about St. Paul's seeing the Lord in the narrative of the conversion in Acts ix. 4-7; but St. Paul asserts that he saw Christ, in his speech before Agrippa, when he represents our Lord as saying (xxvi. 16): "For to this end have I *appeared* unto thee to appoint thee a minister," etc. And again in 1 Cor. xv. 8, "And last of all, as unto one born out of due time, He *appeared* to me also"; with

his soul which never ceased to speak until the things of time and sense were exchanged for the full fruition of Christ's glorious presence.

And then, lastly, we have the conversation held with the trembling penitent. St. Luke's account of it in the ninth chapter is much briefer than St. Paul's own fuller statement in the twenty-sixth chapter, and much of it will most naturally come under our notice at a subsequent period. Here, however, we note the expressive fact that the very name by which the future apostle was addressed by the Lord was Hebrew: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me." It is a point that our English translation cannot bring out, no matter how accurate. In the narrative hitherto the name used has been the Greek form, and he has been regularly called Σαῦλος. But now the Lord appeals to the very foundations of his religious life, and throws him back upon the thought and manifestation of God as revealed of old time to His greatest leader and champion under the old covenant, to Moses in the bush; and so Christ uses not his Greek name but the Hebrew, Σαούλ, Σαούλ. Then we have St. Paul's query, "Who art Thou, Lord?" coupled with our Lord's reply, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest," or, as St. Paul himself puts it in Acts xxii. 8, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest." Ancient expositors have well noted the import of this language. Saul asks who is speaking to

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which should be compared the words of Ananias (ix. 17): "The Lord who *appeared* unto thee in the way which thou camest"; and those of Barnabas (ix. 27): "But Barnabas declared unto them how Saul had *seen* the Lord in the way." The reader would do well to consult Lewin's *St. Paul*, vol. i., ch. iv., p. 50, for a learned note concerning the apparent inconsistencies in the various narratives of the conversion.



him, and the answer is not, The Eternal Word who is from everlasting, the Son of the Infinite One who ruleth in the heavens. Saul would have acknowledged at once that his efforts were not aimed at Him. But the speaker cuts right across the line of Saul's prejudices and feelings, for He says, "I am Jesus of Nazareth," whom you hate so intensely and against whom all your efforts are aimed, emphasizing those points against which his Pharisaic prejudices must have most of all revolted. As an ancient English commentator who lived more than a thousand years ago, treating of this passage, remarks with profound spiritual insight, Saul is called in these words to view the depths of Christ's humiliation that he may lay aside the scales of his own spiritual pride.<sup>1</sup> And then finally we have Christ identifying Himself with His people, and echoing for us from heaven the language and teaching He had used upon earth. "I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest" are words embodying exactly the same teaching as the solemn language in the parable of the Judgment scene contained in Matthew xxv. 31-46: "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me." Christ and His people are evermore one; their trials are His trials, their sorrows are His sorrows, their strength is His strength. What marvellous power to sustain the soul, to confirm the weakness, to support and quicken the fainting courage of Christ's people, we find in this expression, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest"! They enable us to understand the undaunted spirit which henceforth

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<sup>1</sup> See Cornelius à Lapide on Acts ix. 5, quoting from Bede; and St. Chrysostom in Cramer's *Catena*, p. 152, as quoted in Conybeare and Howson's *St. Paul*, vol. i., ch. iii., p. 111 (London, 1877).



animated the new convert, and declare the secret spring of those triumphant expressions, "In all these things we are more than conquerors," "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." If Christ in the supra-sensuous world and we in the world of time are eternally one, what matter the changes and chances of earth, the persecutions and trials of time? They may inflict upon us a little temporary inconvenience, but they are all shared by One whose love makes them His own and whose grace amply sustains us beneath their burden. Christ's people faint not therefore, for they are looking not at the things seen, which are temporal, but at the things unseen, which are eternal.

## CHAPTER III.

### *THE NEW CONVERT AND HIS HUMAN TEACHER.*

“Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias ; and the Lord said unto him in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go to the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one named Saul, a man of Tarsus : for behold, he prayeth.”—ACTS ix. 10, 11.

SAUL of Tarsus was converted outside the city, but the work was only begun there. Christ would put honour upon the work of human ministry, and therefore He directs the stricken sinner to continue his journey and enter into Damascus, where he should be instructed in his future course of action, though Christ Himself might have told him all that was needful. It was much the same on the occasion of the so-called conversion of Cornelius, the pious centurion.<sup>1</sup> The Lord made a revelation to the centurion, but it was only a revelation directing him to send for Peter who should instruct him in the way of salvation. God instituted a human ministry that man might gain light and knowledge by the means and assistance of his brother-man, and therefore in both cases the Lord

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<sup>1</sup> Conversion is scarcely a fit word to apply to the Lord's dealings with Cornelius. He had evidently been converted long before the angelic message and Peter's preaching, else whence his prayers and devotion? The Lord simply made by St. Peter a fuller revelation of His will to a soul longing to know more of God.

points the anxious inquirer to men like themselves, who could speak to them in Christ's stead and guide them into fuller knowledge. Why could not Christ have revealed the whole story of His life, the full meaning of His doctrine, without human aid or intervention, save that He wished, even in the very case of the messenger whose call and apostleship were neither by man nor through man, to honour the human agency which He had ordained for the dissemination and establishment of the gospel. If immediate revelation and the conscious presence of God and the direct work of the Spirit could ever have absolved penitent sinners from using a human ministry and seeking direction and help from mortals like themselves, surely it was in the cases of Saul of Tarsus and Cornelius of Cæsarea ; and yet in both cases a very important portion of the revelation made consisted in a simple intimation where human assistance could be found.<sup>1</sup>

Saul after the vision rose up from the earth and was led by the hand into Damascus. He was there three days without sight, wherein he neither did eat nor drink. This period of his life and this terrible experience is regarded by many as the time to which may be traced the weakness of eyesight and the delicate vision under which he ever afterwards suffered. The

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<sup>1</sup> We should carefully observe, however, that there is a marked difference between the cases of Cornelius and Saul. An angel appeared to Cornelius, Christ Himself to Saul. St. Peter is sent to Cornelius to instruct him in the revelation made by Christ. That revelation was made by Christ Himself to Saul in the vision by the way, during the three days of his blindness, and probably during his stay in Arabia. Ananias was sent to Saul merely to baptize him, and predict his future. "Enter into the city and there it shall be told thee what thou shalt *do*," is our Lord's direction to Saul. St. Paul's knowledge of Christ was neither by man nor through man. His knowledge even about the institution of the sacraments was by immediate revelation : see 1 Cor. xi. 23.

question has often been raised, What was St. Paul's thorn, or rather stake, in the flesh? Various opinions have been hazarded, but that which seems to me most likely to be true identifies the thorn or stake with severe ophthalmia. Six substantial reasons are brought forward by Archdeacon Farrar in defence of this view. (1) When writing to the Galatians St. Paul implies that his infirmity might well have made him an object of loathing to them; and this is specially the case with ophthalmia in the East (see Gal. iv. 14). (2) This supposition again gives a deeper meaning to the Apostle's words to these same Galatians that they would at the beginning of their Christian career have plucked out their eyes to place them at his service (Gal. iv. 15). (3) The term "a stake in the flesh" is quite appropriate to the disease, which imparts to the eyes the appearance of having been wounded by a sharp splinter. (4) Ophthalmia of that kind might have caused epilepsy. (5) It would explain the words "See with how large letters I have written unto you with mine own hand," as a natural reference to the difficulties the Apostle experienced in writing, and would account for his constant use of amanuenses or secretaries in writing his Epistles, as noted, for instance, in Romans xvi. 22 and implied in 1 Corinthians xvi. 21. (6) Ophthalmia would account for St. Paul's ignorance of the person of the high priest (Acts xxiii. 5).<sup>1</sup> This question has, however, been a moot point since the days of the second century, when Irenæus of Lyons discussed it in his great work against Heresies, book v., ch. iii., and Tertullian suggested that St.

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<sup>1</sup> See Tertullian's *De Pudicitia*, § 13, and compare Bishop Lightfoot's *Galatians*, p. 183 note.

Paul's stake in the flesh was simply an exaggerated head-ache or ear-ache.<sup>1</sup>

Let us now, however, turn to the more certain facts brought before us in the words of the sacred narrative. St. Paul was led by the hand into Damascus just as afterwards, on account, doubtless, of the same bodily infirmity dating from this crisis, he "was sent forth to go as far as to the sea," and then "was conducted as far as Athens" (cf. Acts xvii. 10, 14, 15). From this time forth the kindly assistance of friends and companions became absolutely necessary to the Apostle if his footsteps were to be guided aright, and hence it is that he felt solitude such as he endured at Athens a very trying time because he had no sense of security whenever he ventured to walk abroad. He became, in fact, a blind man striving to thread his way through the crowded footpaths of life. The high priest's commissary must then have drawn near to Damascus under very different circumstances from those which fancy pictured for him a few days before. We know not by what gate he entered the city. We only know that he made his way to the house of Judas, where he remained for three days and three nights, with his whole soul so wrapt up in the wonders revealed to him that he had no thoughts for bodily wants and no sense of their demands.

The sacred narrative has been amply vindicated so far as its topographical accuracy is concerned. Saul, as he was led by the hand, instructed his escort to go

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<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Farrar's long Excursus X., vol. i., p. 652, in his *Life of St. Paul*, for a discussion of this question. There is a portrait of St. Paul in Lewin's *St. Paul*, ii., 210, which shows him as blear-eyed. It is engraved from a Roman diptych of the fourth century. Light-foot takes quite another view of the thorn in his *Galatians*, pp. 183-8:

to the house of Judas, a leading man we may be sure among the Jews of Damascus. He dwelt in Straight Street, and that street remains to-day, as in St. Paul's time, a thoroughfare running in a direct line from the eastern to the western gate of the city. Like all Oriental cities which have fallen under Turkish dominion, Damascus no longer presents the stately, well-preserved, and flourishing aspect which it had in Roman times; and, in keeping with the rest of the city, Straight Street has lost a great deal of the magnificent proportions which it once possessed. Straight Street in St. Paul's day extended from the eastern to the western gate, completely intersecting the city. It then was a noble thoroughfare one hundred feet broad, divided by Corinthian colonnades into three avenues, the central one for foot passengers, the side passages for chariots and horses going in opposite directions. It was to a house in this principal street in the city, the habitation of an opulent and distinguished Jew, that the escort brought the blind emissary of the Sanhedrin, and here they left him to await the development of God's purposes.<sup>1</sup>

I. Let us now consider the persons which cluster round the new convert, and specially the agent whom Christ used in the reception of Saul into the Church,

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<sup>1</sup> "In the Roman age, and up to the period of the (Mahometan) Conquest, a noble street extended in a straight line from Bab-el-Jabyah (the West gate) to Bab Shurky (the East gate), thus completely intersecting the city. It was divided by Corinthian colonnades into three avenues, of which the central was for foot passengers, and of the others one was used for chariots and horsemen proceeding eastward, and the second for those going in the opposite direction. I have been enabled to trace the remains of the colonnades at various places over nearly one-third of the length of this street. Wherever excavations are made in the line fragments of columns are found *in situ*, at the depth, in

and see what Scripture or tradition tells about them. One man stands prominent ; his name was Ananias, a common one enough among the Jews, as the Acts of the Apostles has already shown us, for when we have surveyed the first beginnings of sin and moral failure in the Jerusalem Church we have found that an Ananias with Sapphira his wife was connected therewith.<sup>1</sup> This Ananias of Damascus deserves special attention, for his case reveals to us a good deal of primitive Church history and is connected with many ancient traditions. Let us first strive to gain all the information we can about him from the direct statements of Scripture and the necessary or legitimate deductions from the same. Ananias was a Christian Jew of Damascus. He must have held a leading position in the local Christian Assembly in that city, within five years of the Ascension, for not only did our Lord select him as His agent or medium of communication when dealing with the new convert, but Ananias was well acquainted, by information derived from many persons, with the course of conduct pursued at Jerusalem by Saul, and knew of the commission lately intrusted to him by the high priest. Ananias was probably the head or chief teacher of the local Christian or Nazarene

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some places, of ten feet and more below the present surface, so great has been the accumulation of rubbish during the course of ages. There can scarcely be a doubt that this is 'the street called Straight' referred to in the history of the Apostle Paul. Its extreme length is about an English mile, and its breadth must have exceeded 100 feet."—PORTER'S *Damascus*, p. 47.

<sup>1</sup> Josephus, in his *Antiquities*, xx., 23, tells us of an Ananias, a Jewish merchant, who was instrumental in the conversion of Helena, Queen of Adiabene. The name Ananias signifies "Pleasing to God." Ananias was also the name of the messenger who is said to have conveyed the pretended letter of Abgar, King of Edessa, to Christ. See *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, by R. A. Lipsius (Leipsic, 1891), p. 274.



synagogue. At the same time he was also in all probability one of the original company of Jerusalem Christians who had been scattered abroad by the first great persecution. We are told in Acts xi. 19 that "they that were scattered abroad upon the tribulation that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phœnicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to none save only to Jews." Ananias was probably one of these fugitives from Jerusalem who came to Damascus, and there sought refuge from the rage of the destroyer. St. Paul himself tells us of the character which Ananias sustained at Damascus: "He was a devout man according to the law, well reported of by all the Jews that dwell there" (ch. xxii. 12). It is the character given of Zacharias, and Elisabeth, and of Simeon. Ananias was, like all the earliest disciples, a rigid observer of the minutest particulars of Jewish ordinances, though he and they alike rested upon Christ alone as their hope of salvation. Further than this, the Scriptures tell us nothing save that we can easily see from the words of the various narratives of the conversion that Ananias was a man of that clear faith, that deep spiritual life which enjoyed perpetual converse with the Unseen. He was not perturbed nor dismayed when Christ revealed Himself. He conversed calmly with the heavenly Visitor, raised his objections, received their solution, and then departed in humble obedience to fulfil the mission committed to him. There is a marvellous strength and power for the man of any age who lives, as Ananias did, with a clear vision of the eternal world constantly visible to the spiritual eye. Life or death, things present or things to come, the world temporal or the world spiritual, all are one to him who lives in the light of God's countenance



and walks beneath the shadow of His wing; for he feels and knows that underneath are the everlasting Arms, and he therefore discharges his tasks with an assured calmness, a quiet dignity, a heavenly strength of which the tempest-tossed and feverish children of time know nothing. Beyond these facts and these traits of character, which we can read between the lines of Holy Scripture, we are told nothing of Ananias.<sup>1</sup> But tradition has not been so reticent. The ancient Church delighted to gather up every notice and every story concerning the early soldiers of the Cross, and Ananias of Damascus was not forgotten. The Martyrologies both of the Greek and Latin Churches give us long accounts of him. They tell that he was born in Damascus, and make him one of the seventy disciples, which is not at all improbable. Then they describe him at one time as bishop, at another time

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<sup>1</sup> St. Chrysostom, in his *Homilies on the Acts*, notes the spiritual eminence of this hidden and unknown disciple. In his nineteenth Homily he observes that when St. Philip, one of the seven, was sent to baptize the eunuch, Christ did not appear but merely sent an angel to the evangelist; but Christ Himself appeared to Ananias, and opened out His whole will to him about the future of St. Paul. His conversation with our Lord was, too, that of one accustomed to Divine visitations and communion with Heaven. See Massutius on the Life of St. Paul, p. 107. Massutius was a Jesuit commentator, whose writings are often rich in spiritual suggestiveness. He published his *Vita S. Pauli Apostoli* in 1633. In the first and ninth chapters of the second book he has many acute and learned remarks upon Ananias and his history. The calming effect upon life's fever of spiritual religion and close converse with God is a point often dwelt upon in Scripture. The Old Testament prophets knew this secret of a peaceful life right well. Isaiah often sings of it, as in ch. xii. 2, "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid"; in ch. xxvi. 3, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee"; in ch. xxviii. 16, "He that believeth shall not make haste"; in ch. xl. 31, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up

as a simple presbyter, of the Church at Damascus. They relate his abundant labours at Damascus and in the neighbouring cities, terminating with his martyrdom under a Roman prefect called Lucian.<sup>1</sup> But these details, though they may lend colour to the picture, add nothing of spiritual significance to the information vouchsafed in Scripture.

Judas, into whose house Saul was received, is another person brought before us, upon whom a certain eternity of fame has been bestowed by his temporary connexion with the Apostle. He must have been a man of position and wealth among the Jews of Damascus to receive the official representative and deputy of the high priest. It is possible that he may have been numbered among those early trophies of St. Paul's zeal which he won in the earliest days of his first love, when he "confounded the Jews, proving

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with wings as eagles ; they shall run, and not be weary ; they shall walk, and not faint." Habakkuk proclaims it in ch. iii. 17 : "For though the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines ; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat ; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls : yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." A strain which St. Paul takes up in his Epistle to the Philippians when he bids them (ch. iv. 6), "In nothing be anxious ; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" ; to which he adds the promise, not that their requests shall be answered, for that would often be very unfortunate, but the much more consoling one, "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus." How much calmer and sweeter life would be did Christ's people thus realise their privileges as God's ancient servants did ! Ninety per cent. of life's worries and anxieties would thus pass away for ever. Alas ! how pagan nominal Christians are in this respect !

<sup>1</sup> See, for both the Greek and Latin stories about Ananias, *Acta Sanctorum*, Ed. Bolland., 25 Jan., ii., 613.

that Jesus is Christ." Judas has been by some identified with that Judas who was sent with St. Paul, Silas, and Barnabas as deputies to console the Church at Antioch and restore it to peace when distracted with debates about circumcision (ch. xv. 22).<sup>1</sup>

And now, to conclude this portion of our subject, we may add that the traditional houses, or at least the sites of the houses, of Ananias and Judas, together with the fountain where St. Paul was baptized, were shown in Damascus till the seventeenth century, as Quaresmius, a traveller of that time, tells us that he visited the Straight Street, which is the bazaar, and saw the house of Judas, a large and commodious building, with traces of having been once a church and then a mosque; that he visited the place of baptism, which is not far off, adding withal a ground plan of the house of Ananias. Dean Stanley, however, declares that the traditional house of Judas is not in the street called Straight at all. Let us turn aside from these details, the mere fringes of the story, to the spiritual heart and core thereof.<sup>2</sup>

II. The conversation between Christ and Ananias next claims our attention. Here we may note that it was the Lord Jesus Christ Himself who appeared to Ananias, and when appearing makes the most tremendous claims for Himself and allows them when made by Ananias. We are so accustomed to the words of

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<sup>1</sup> Judas of Acts xv. 22 is surnamed Barsabbas, as is also Joseph Justus of Acts i. 23. Lightfoot, *Hor. Heb.*, on Acts i., conjectures that Judas of Acts xv. may have been the apostle of that name and that Joseph Justus was his brother.

<sup>2</sup> The seventeenth-century travellers in Palestine, Syria, and the East often give us much valuable information. See, on the subject of Damascus, Quaresmius, *Elucidatio Terræ Sanctæ*, t. ii., lib. 7, Peregrinatio 6, cap. 3, with which may be compared Radzivilus, *Peregrinatio*, p. 33, A.D. 1614. See also Conybeare and Howson's *St. Paul*, ch. iii.

the narrative that we do not recognise their bold assumptions and what they imply. The Lord calls Ananias, as He called Samuel of old, and then receives the same answer as Samuel gave, "Behold I am here, Lord." Ananias speaks to Jesus Christ of the disciples, and describes them as "*Thy* saints, who call upon *Thy* name." He knew that prayer to Jesus Christ was practised by them and constituted their special note or mark. Our Lord describes St. Paul "as a chosen vessel unto *Me*, to bear *My name* before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel, for *I* will show him how many things he must suffer for *My name's* sake." While again, when Ananias came into the house of Judas, he is so completely dominated by the idea of Jesus Christ, His presence, His power, His mission, that his words are, "The Lord Jesus hath sent me that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." In these passages we have a view of primitive Christianity and its doctrine as taught by Christ Himself, by His earliest disciples, and as viewed and recorded by the second generation of Christians, and it is all the same from whatever point it is looked at. The earliest form of Christianity was Christ and nothing else. The personality of Christ dominated every other idea. There was no explaining away the historical facts of His life, there was no watering down His supernatural actions and claims; the Lord Jesus—and His ordinary human name was used—the Lord Jesus, whom the Jews had known as the carpenter's son, and had rejected as the prophet of Nazareth, and had crucified as the pretended king of Israel, He was for Ananias of Damascus the supernatural Being who now ruled the universe, and struck down the persecutor of His people, and sent His messengers and apostles

that they might with Divine power heal the wounded and comfort the broken-hearted. Ananias felt no difficulty in identifying Jesus the despised, the crucified, with the Lord of glory who had appeared to him, upon whose name he called and with whom he communed. Jesus Christ was not for him a dream or a ghost, or a passing appearance, or a distinguished teacher, or a mighty prophet, whose spirit lived with the souls of the good and blessed of every age at rest in paradise. The Jesus of Ananias was no inhabitant or child of earth, no matter how pure and exalted. The Jesus of Nazareth was the Being of beings, who had a just right to call God's people "His saints," and to describe the great work of His messengers and ministers to be that of "bearing His name before the Gentiles," because the Christianity of Ananias and of the earliest Church was no poor, weak, diluted system of mere natural religion regarding Jesus Christ as a Divine prophet, but as nothing more. It theorised not, indeed, about the Incarnation and the modes of the Divine existence. It was too much wrapped up in adoring the Divine manifestations to trouble itself about such questions, which came to the front when love waxed cold and men had time to analyse and debate. For Ananias and for men like him it was sufficient to know that Jesus Christ was God manifest in the flesh. For them and for the earliest Church that one fact embodied the whole of Christianity. Jesus Christ, the same when living in Galilee, suffering in Jerusalem, ascending from Olivet, reigning on the right hand of the Majesty on high, or manifesting Himself to His people, was the beginning and end of all religion.

This is a very important point to insist upon in the present age, when men have endeavoured to represent

the religion of the primitive Church in quite a different light, and to teach that St. Paul was the inventor of that dogmatic system which insists upon the supreme importance and the essential deity of the Person of Jesus Christ. St. Luke's narrative in this passage seems to me quite decisive against such a theory, and shows us how Christianity struck an independent mind like that of Ananias, and how it was taught at a distant Christian Church like Damascus within five or at most seven years after the Ascension of Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Then, again, we have in the vision granted to Ananias and the revelation made to him a description of Christ's disciples. The description is a twofold one, coming on the one hand from Christ, and on the other from Ananias, and yet they both agree. Ananias describes the religion of Christ when he says, "Lord, I have heard from many of this man, how much evil he did to Thy saints at Jerusalem"; and then he proceeds to identify His "saints" with those that called on Christ's name at Damascus. We have already noted prayer to Christ as a distinguishing feature of His people<sup>2</sup>; but here we find, for the first time in the New Testament, the term "saints" applied to the ordinary followers of Christ, though in a short time it seems to have become the usual designation for the adherents of the crucified Redeemer, as we shall see by a reference to Rom. i. 7; 1 Cor. i. 2; Eph. i. 1, and to numerous other passages scattered throughout the Epistles. Our Lord Himself

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<sup>1</sup> Massutius, *loc. cit.*, has a long chapter (book ii., ch. i.) on the date of St. Paul's conversion. See Findlay's *Epistles of St. Paul*, pp. 5, 6, for a concise statement of the arguments concerning it. Lewin's *Fæsti Sacri*, pp. lxvi. and 253, contains long dissertations upon this point, a simple reference to which must suffice.

<sup>2</sup>. See vol. i., pp. 338-41.

sanctions the use of this title, and applies it Himself in a different shape in the fuller account of the divine words given us by St. Paul in his speech before King Agrippa (ch. xxvi. 18). Christ tells St. Paul of his destined work "to turn the Gentiles from darkness to light, that they may receive an inheritance among them which are *sanctified* by faith that is in Me." The followers of Christ were recognised as saints in the true sense of the word saint—that is, as separated, dedicated, consecrated persons, who had been made to drink into one Divine Spirit, had been made partakers of a new life, had been admitted to a kingdom of light and a fellowship of love, and who, by virtue of these blessings, had been cut off from the power of Satan and the kingdom of darkness. And all this had been and ever is to be effected "by faith that is in Christ." Christ's saints or separated people are sanctified by faith in Christ. Not that the bare exercise of a faculty or feeling called faith will exercise a sanctifying influence upon human nature,—this would be simply to make man his own sanctifier, and to usurp for his own poor weak wretched self the work and power which belong to the Holy Ghost alone,—but when Christ is realised as including all the parts of God's final revelation, when no partial or limited view is taken of Christ's work as if it were limited to the Incarnation alone, or the Atonement alone, or the Resurrection alone, but when the diverse and various parts and laws of His revelation are recognised as divinely taught, and therefore as tremendously important for the soul's health. When the Holy Ghost and His mission, and good works and their absolute necessity, and Christ's sacraments and His other appointed means of grace are duly honoured and reverently received, then indeed, and



then alone, faith is truly exercised in Christ, and men are not merely separated by an external consecration, such as the Jews received at circumcision, and which qualified even that hard-hearted and stubborn people to be called a nation of saints ; but when Christ is thus truly and fully received by faith into the hearts and affections of His people, they walk worthy of the high vocation called upon them. Many a mistaken exposition has been offered of St. Paul's Epistles, and many an effort has been made to explain away the plainest statements, because men will apply a false meaning to the word saints which Ananias here uses. If we first determine that the word saint could only have been applied to a truly converted man, clothed in the robe of Christ's imputed righteousness, elected from eternity to everlasting salvation, and who could never finally fall away, and then find the term so defined applied, for instance, to the Corinthian Church as a whole, we shall come to some strange results. If truly converted men, true saints of Christ, could be guilty of sins such as were not named amongst the heathen, or could be drunk at the Lord's Table, or could cherish all that long and dreary catalogue of spiritual crimes enumerated in the Corinthian Epistles, then indeed the words true conversion have completely changed their meaning, and Christianity, instead of being the principle and fountain of a regenerate life, becomes a cloak under which all kinds of maliciousness and evil-doing may have free course and be glorified.

Our Lord protests beforehand unto St. Paul against such a perversion of the gospel of free grace with which His great Apostle had all his life to struggle. Antinomianism is as old as St. Paul's doctrine—so very much misunderstood—of justification. Our Lord



raises His voice against it in His earliest commission to St. Paul when He sends him to the Gentiles "to turn them from darkness to light," that is, from moral and spiritual darkness to moral and spiritual light, and "from the power of Satan unto God." And the New Testament often enough tells us what is meant by "the power of Satan." It was not any mere system of false beliefs alone, but it was a wicked, impure belief joined and leading to a wicked and impure practice; and St. Paul's work was to turn the Gentiles from a wicked faith, combined with a still more wicked practice, to a life sanctified and purified and renewed after the image of a living Christ.<sup>1</sup>

III. Finally, we notice in this conversation, and that only very briefly, the title given by our Lord to St. Paul, which became the favourite designation of the Apostle of the Gentiles, especially among the Western doctors of the ancient Church. "Go thy way," says Christ to Ananias, "for he is a chosen vessel unto Me," or, as the Revisers put it in the margin, translating still more literally from the original, "for he is a vessel of election." "Vas

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<sup>1</sup> I am referring in this passage to what we may designate the Antinomian method of expounding First Corinthians still current in many circles. They first determine that the word saint is always used by St. Paul to express a truly converted man, one, therefore, in their idea who has no need to ask pardon for sin and who never can finally fall away. They then find this term "saints" applied to the Corinthian Church, which must therefore have been composed of truly converted men alone, else, they think, St. Paul would not have called them saints. But then a difficulty arises, How about the gross sins prevalent in that Church? Their peculiar system of theology, however, rapidly solves this perplexing point. All the sins of believers, past, present or to come, have been forgiven long before they were born, therefore these gross immoralities at Corinth were mere believer's slips, as I have heard them called. A believer guilty of them should be sorry for them as causing scandal to the world, but as far as final salvation is concerned he has nothing to do with them save to assure himself of their pardon

Electionis" is the usual title for St. Paul in St. Jerome's letters, as also in St. Chrysostom's homilies, and it expresses a side of his character which is prominent throughout his writings. Saul's early life was so alienated from Christ, his career had been so completely hostile to the gospel, his conversion had been so entirely God's work and God's work alone, that he ever felt and ever insisted more than the other New Testament writers on God's electing love. If we compare the writings of St. John with those of St. Paul, we shall see how naturally and completely they reflect in their tone the history of their lives. St. John's life was one long continuous steady growth in Divine knowledge. There were no great gaps or breaks in that life, and so we find that his writings do not ignore God's electing love and preventing grace as the source of everything good in man. "We love Him because He first loved us" are words which show that St. John's gospel was at bottom the same as St. Paul's. But St. John's favourite topic is the Incarnation and its importance, and its results in purity of heart and in a sweet consciousness

wrought out by our Lord on the cross. Abundant instances of this method of exposition will be found in the works of Dr. Williams, the Nonconformist of the time of William III., founder of the well-known library in Grafton Street, London. He had a great controversy with the Antinomians of the day, who represented themselves as the true champions of the doctrines of grace. They were simply teaching the ancient Gnostic heresy that the soul can be in communion with God while the body is all the time wallowing in the depths of sin. Precisely the same views are now commonly taught and called as in Williams's day, two hundred years ago, "the Gospel." If, however, we recognise the New Testament use of the word saints as meaning "dedicated to God, consecrated to His service," the meaning of the First Corinthians and of the words of Ananias is quite clear and plain, and no such immoral results follow as the Antinomian exegesis implies, but rather the saintly character of baptized Christians becomes the foundation of the most practical exhortations to holiness of life.

of the Divine Spirit. St. Paul's life, on the other hand, was no continuous upgrowth from youth's earliest day to life's latest eventide. There was a great gap, a tremendous yawning chasm separating the one portion from the other, and Paul never could forget that it was God's choice alone which turned the persecuting Rabbi into the Christian Apostle. His Epistles to the Romans, Ephesians, and Galatians amply testify to the effects of this doctrine upon his whole soul, and show that the expositors of the early Church displayed a true instinct and gauged his character aright when they designated him by this title, "*Vas Electionis*." And yet the Apostle proved his Divine inspiration, for he held and taught this truth in no one-sided manner. He combined the doctrine of electing love with that of intense human free will and awful personal responsibility. He made no effort intellectually to reconcile the two opposite sides of truth, but, wiser than many who followed him, he accepted both and found in them both, matter for practical guidance. God's eternal and electing love made him humble; man's free will and responsibility made him awfully in earnest. Two passages, drawn from different Epistles, sufficiently explain St. Paul's view. Gal. i. 15, 16—"When it was the good pleasure of God, who separated me, even from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me"—are words which show how entirely St. Paul viewed himself as a "*Vas Electionis*." 1 Cor. ix. 27—"I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage, lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected"—are words showing how real and profound was his fear of final defeat and ruin, how convinced he was that no display of Divine grace or love assured him of his own final perseverance. It is

well that people should notice this difference between the tone and spiritual experience of a Paul and of a John. At times sincere Christians have been troubled because their spiritual experience and feelings have been very different from St. Paul's. They have limited to a large extent their own reading of Scripture to his writings, and have not noticed the clear distinction which Scripture makes between the tone and ideas of St. Paul and St. Peter, St. James and St. John; and why? Just to meet this very tendency, and to show us that spiritual experiences, feelings, temptations, must vary with the varying circumstances of each individual. No saintly life can be taken as a universal model or standard; and, above all, the conversion of a persecutor and blasphemer like St. Paul is not to be taken as the normal type of God's dealings with men, who grow up, like St. John or like Timothy, in the paths of Divine love from their earliest childhood.<sup>1</sup>

There is one common feature, however, which can be traced in all religious lives, whether sternly and even violently ordered like Saul's, or gently guided like St. John's. They all agree in presenting one feature when the fresh breath of the Spirit blows upon them and the deeper sense of life's importance first dawns upon the vision, and that is, they are all marked by prayer. Of every sincere seeker the Divine watcher, ever on the outlook for the signs of spiritual life, repeats

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<sup>1</sup> It should be carefully noted that the great end of St. Paul's election is set forth by our Lord when speaking to Ananias as "to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel." From the very outset of Paul's Christian career his work as the Apostle of the Gentiles is thus clearly revealed through Ananias. I say *through* Ananias, and not *to* him; for I suppose that Ananias could not himself have realised the real force and meaning of the Divine words.

“Behold, he prayeth.” Saul, we may be sure, had never forgotten his duty in the matter of the prescribed round of Jewish devotions; but now for the first time he rose above the level of mere mechanical saying of prayer to spiritual communion with God in Christ; now for the first time he prayed a Christian prayer, through Christ and to Christ; now for the first time perhaps he learned one secret of the spiritual life, which is this, that prayer is something wider and nobler than mere asking. Prayer is communion of the spirit with God reconciled in Christ Jesus. That communion is often deepest and most comforting when enjoyed in simple silence. Saul, the converted persecutor, could know but little yet of what to ask from Christ. But in the revelations made in those hours of darkness and penitence and silence, there were vouchsafed to him renewed proofs of the truths already gained, and of the awful trials which those truths, realised and acted out, would demand from him, “I will show him what things he must suffer for My sake.”

## CHAPTER IV.

### *SAUL AND SINAI.*

“Saul was certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway in the synagogues he proclaimed Jesus, that He is the Son of God.”—ACTS ix. 19, 20.

WE have bestowed a great deal of attention upon the incidents at Damascus, because the conversion of Saul of Tarsus is more closely connected with the truth and authenticity of Christianity than any other event save those immediately connected with the life and ministry of our Lord Himself. We shall, however, in this chapter, endeavour to discuss the remaining circumstances of it which the Acts of the Apostles brings under our notice.

I. We are told in verse 17 of the visit of Ananias to Saul. “Ananias departed, and entered into the house ; and laying his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, who appeared unto thee in the way which thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.” This conversation with Ananias is largely expanded by St. Paul himself in the account which he gives us in Acts xxii., while in his speech to Agrippa in the twenty-sixth chapter he entirely omits all mention of Ananias, and seems to introduce our Lord as the only person who spoke to him, and yet there is no real inconsistency.

St. Paul, in fact, in the latter address is intent on setting vividly before Agrippa the sum total of the revelations made by Christ. He ignores, therefore, every secondary agent. Ananias was Christ's messenger. His words were merely those which Christ put into his mouth. St. Paul goes, therefore, to the root of the matter, and attributes everything, whether uttered by our Lord or by Ananias, to the former alone, who was, indeed, the great Inspirer of every expression, the true Director of every minutest portion of this important transaction.

The ninth chapter, on the other hand, breaks the story up into its component parts, and shows us the various actors in the scene. We see the Lord Jesus consciously presiding over all, revealing Himself now to this person and again to that person. We get a glimpse for a moment behind the veil which Divine Providence throws around His doings and the doings of the children of men. We see Christ revealing Himself now to Saul and then to Ananias, informing the latter of the revelations made to the former; just as He subsequently revealed Himself almost simultaneously to Cornelius at Cæsarea and to Simon Peter at Joppa, preparing the one for the other. The Lord thus hints at an explanation of those simultaneous cravings, aspirations, and spiritual desires which we often find unaccountably arising amid far distant lands and in widely separated hearts. The feelings may seem but vague aspirations and their coincidence a mere chance one, but the typical cases of Saul and Ananias, or of Cornelius and St. Peter, teach the believer to see in them the direct action and government of the Lord Jesus Christ, turning the hearts of the fathers to the children and of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. Surely we have an instance of such simultaneous operations of the



Divine Spirit, and that on the largest scale, in the cravings of the world after a Saviour at the age and time when our Lord came ! Virgil was then preaching in tones so Christian concerning the coming Saviour whom the world was expecting, that the great Italian poet Dante exempts him from hell on account of his dim but real faith. The Wise Men were then seeking Christ from a far country ; Caiaphas was prophesying concerning a man who was to die for God's people. Mankind, all the world over, was unconsciously longing with a divinely inspired desire for that very salvation which God was then revealing ; just as upon the narrower stage of Damascus or Cæsarea Jesus Christ inspired Saul and Cornelius with a Divine want and prepared Ananias and Peter to satisfy it. John Keble in his poem for Easter Monday has well seized and illustrated this point, so full of comfort and edification, turning it into a practical direction for the life of the human spirit :—

“ Even so the course of prayer who knows ?  
It springs in silence where it will,  
Springs out of sight, and flows  
At first a lonely rill.

“ Unheard by all but angel ears,  
The good Cornelius knelt alone,  
Nor dreamed his prayers and tears  
Could help a world undone.

“ The while upon his terraced roof,  
The loved apostle to the Lord,  
In silent thought aloof,  
For heavenly vision soared.

“ The saint beside the ocean prayed,  
The soldier in his chosen bower,  
Where all his eye surveyed  
Seemed sacred in that hour.



“To each unknown his brother’s prayer,  
Yet brethren true in dearest love  
Were they—and now they share  
Fraternal joys above.”

Ananias, guided by Divine Providence, enters into Saul’s presence, states his mission, lays his hands upon him and restores him to sight. Ananias is careful, however, to disclaim all merit so far as he is himself concerned in the matter of this miracle. His language is exactly the same in tone as that of the apostles Peter and John when they had healed the impotent man: “Why marvel ye at this man? or why fasten ye your eyes on us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made him to walk? . . . By faith in His name hath His name made this man strong,” were their words to the people. “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk,” was their command to the man himself. And so in the case of Ananias, he attributes the healing power to Jesus Christ alone. “The Lord Jesus, who appeared unto thee, . . . hath sent me, that thou mayest receive thy sight.” The theology and faith of the Church at Damascus were exactly the same as those of the Apostles and Church at Jerusalem. And what a confirmation of Saul’s own faith must this miracle have been! It was then no passing vision, no fancy of a heated imagination which he had experienced; but he had the actual proof in his own person of their objective reality, a demonstration that the power of Jesus of Nazareth ordered all things, both in heaven and earth, healing the bodily as it could illuminate the spiritual eye.

II. Ananias restored Saul’s sight. According to the ninth of Acts his mission was limited to this one point; but, according to St. Paul’s own account in the

twenty-second chapter, he made a much longer communication to the future Apostle: "The God of our fathers hath appointed thee to know His will, and to see the Righteous One, and to hear a voice from His mouth. For thou shalt be a witness for Him unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on His name." Ananias predicted to Saul his future mission, his apostleship to all nations, and the fact that the Apostle of the Gentiles would find the root and sustenance of his work in the force of personal conviction with which his miraculous conversion had endowed him. Personal knowledge, individual acquaintance with the things of the eternal world was then, as it is still, the first condition of successful work for Jesus Christ. There may be intellectual power, intense energy, transcendent eloquence, consummate ability; but in the spiritual order these things avail nothing till there be joined thereto that sense of heavenly force and reality which a personal knowledge of the things unseen imparts. Then heart answers to heart, and the great depths of man's nature respond and open themselves to the voice and teaching of one who speaks as St. Paul did of what "he had seen and heard."

There are two points in this address of Ananias as reported by St. Paul himself to which we would direct special attention. Ananias baptized Saul, and used very decided language on the subject, language from which some would now shrink. These two points embody important teaching. Ananias baptized Saul though Christ had personally called him. This shows the importance which the Holy Scriptures attach to baptism, and shows us something too of the nature of

Holy Scripture itself. St. Luke wrote the Acts as a kind of continuation of his Gospel, to give an account to Theophilus of the rise and progress of Christianity down to his own time. St. Luke in doing so tells us of the institution of the Eucharist, but he does not say one word in his Gospel about the appointment of baptism. He does not record the baptismal commission, for which we must turn to St. Matthew xxviii. 19, or to St. Mark xvi. 16. Yet St. Luke is careful to report the baptism of the three thousand on the Day of Pentecost, of the Samaritans, of the eunuch, and now of St. Paul, as afterwards of Cornelius, of Lydia, of the Philippian jailor, and of the Ephesian followers of John the Baptist. He records the universality of Christian baptism, and thus proves its obligation; but he does not give us a hint of the origin of this sacrament, nor does he trace it back to any word or command of the Lord Jesus Christ. He evidently took all these things as quite well known and understood, and merely describes the observance of a sacrament which needed no explanation on his part. The writings of St. Luke were intended to instruct Theophilus in the facts concerning our Lord's life and the labours of certain leading individuals among His earliest followers; but they make no pretence, nor do the other Gospels make any pretence, of being an exhaustive history of our Lord's ministry or of the practice of the earliest Church; and their silence does not necessarily prove that much was not known and practised in the early Church about which they have no occasion to speak.<sup>1</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> Archbishop Whately used to make an important distinction between things *anti*-Scriptural and things *un*-Scriptural. Things *anti*-Scriptural cannot be tolerated by the Church, because they contradict the Word of God. Things *un*-Scriptural, that is, things about which Scripture is

words of Ananias and the obedience of Saul show us the importance which the Holy Spirit attached to this sacrament of baptism. Here was a man to whom Christ Himself had personally appeared, whom Christ had personally called, and to whom He had made long-continued revelations of His will. Yet He instructed him by the mouth of Ananias to receive the sacrament of baptism. Surely if any man was ever exempted from submission to what some would esteem the outward ordinance, it was this penitent and privileged convert! But no: to him the words of God's messenger are the same as to the humblest sinner, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins." I have known of truly good men who showed their want of spiritual humility, or perhaps I should rather say of spiritual thought and reflection, in this direction. I have known of persons aroused from religious torpor and death by powerful though one-sided teaching. God has blessed such teaching to the awakening in them of the first elements of spiritual life, and then they have stopped short. They were called, as Saul was, in an unbaptized state. They had never previously received the sacrament of regeneration according to Christ's appointment, and when Christ aroused them they thought this primal blessing quite sufficient, and judged it unnecessary to obey the full commands of Christ and be united by baptism to His

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silent and for which no direct warrant can be produced, may be right or wrong, useful or vicious. Sunday schools, for instance, are in this sense unscriptural. The Scriptures are silent about them, and if direct warrant with chapter and verse be required for them, none such can be produced. Hooker, in his Third Book, ch. v.-viii., has a powerful argument upon this subject as against the ultra-reformers or Puritans of his day, who would have tied the Church within much tighter bonds than ever Judaism submitted to.

Body the Church. They judged, in fact, that the blessing of conversion absolved them from the sacrament of responsibility ; but such was not the view of the primitive Church. The blessing of conversion as in St. Paul's case, the visible and audible descent of the Holy Ghost as in the case of Cornelius, hindered not the importance nor dispensed with the necessity of the sacrament of baptism, which was the door of admission to the Divine society and to a higher level in the Divine life than any hitherto attained. Persons who act as those misguided individuals of whom we have spoken stop short at the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, and they attain to none of its heights, they sound none of its depths, because they bend not their wills, and learn not the sweetness and the power involved in spiritual humiliation and in lowly self-denying obedience taught by the Master Himself when He said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."<sup>1</sup>

The language, again, of Ananias about baptism sounds strange in some ears, and yet the experience of mis-

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<sup>1</sup> I have known cases where baptism was rejected avowedly on these grounds. This is of course a natural result of the pushing individualism in religion to an extreme, and is often found among what we may call extreme Protestants. It naturally results from two errors. First of all, from a rejection of the article of the Apostles' Creed, "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church." Such men reject the doctrine of a Church as a great fundamental article of the Creed, one of the necessary articles of the Christian faith, and therefore they reject baptism which is the door of entrance into the Divine society. And, secondly, they reject the true definition and idea of a sacrament. They view baptism, for instance, as the expression merely of a faith already received, and as nothing more. If, then, they express this faith sufficiently by their life and actions, baptism seems to them an empty and vain ceremony. But surely this was not St. Paul's view, either when he received baptism at the hands of Ananias, or when he wrote in the sixth of Romans "We were buried therefore with Him through baptism into death."

sionaries is a sufficient explanation of it. What is that language? "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins." These words sound startling to one accustomed to identify the washing away of sin with the exercise of faith, and yet there they stand, and no method of exegesis will avail to make them say anything else than this, that baptism was for Saul the washing away of sin, so that if he did not accept baptism his sins would not have been washed away. The experience, however, of those who labour in the mission field explains the whole difficulty. Baptism is the act of open confession and acknowledgment of Christ. St. Paul himself teaches the absolute importance of this confession: "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."<sup>1</sup> Pagan converts are even still abundantly found who are willing to accept the pure morality and the sublime teaching of Christianity, who are willing to believe and see in Jesus Christ the supreme revelation of God made to the human race, but who are not willing to incur loss and persecution and trial for His sake by the reception of Christian baptism and a public confession of their faith. They may believe with the heart in the revelation of righteousness and may lead moral lives in consequence, but they are not willing to make public confession leading them into a state of salvation. They are, in fact, in the position of Saul of Tarsus as he prayed in the house of Judas, but they will go no farther. They will not act as he did, they will not take the decisive step, they will not arise and be baptized and wash away their sins, calling on the name of Jesus Christ. And if Saul of Tarsus had been like them and had acted

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<sup>1</sup> Romans x. 10.

as they do, he might have received the vision and have been convinced of the truth of Jesus Christ and of His mission, but yet his moral cowardice would have spoilt the whole, and Saul would have remained in his sins, unpardoned, unaccepted, reprobate from Christ, because he remained unbaptized. Christianity, in fact, is a covenant, and forgiveness of sins is one of the blessings attached to this covenant. Until men perform its conditions and actually enter into the covenant the blessings of the covenant are not granted. Baptism is the door of entry into the covenant of grace, and till men humbly enter within the door they do not exercise true faith. They may believe intellectually in the truth and reality of Christianity, but, till they take the decisive step and obey Christ's law, they do not possess that true faith of the heart which alone enables them, like Saul of Tarsus, to obey Christ and therefore enter into peace.

III. The next step taken by the Apostle is equally plainly stated: "Straightway in the synagogues he proclaimed Jesus, that He is the Son of God." But, though the words of the Acts are plain enough, it is not so easy to reconcile them with St. Paul's own account, as given in the Epistle to the Galatians (i. 15, 16, 17), where he states, "When it was the good pleasure of God to reveal His Son in me, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood, but I went away into Arabia, and again I returned to Damascus." In the ninth chapter of the Acts we find the statement made that *immediately* after his baptism he preached Christ in the synagogues of Damascus, while in his own biographical narrative he tells us that *immediately* after his baptism he went away into Arabia. Is there any way in which we can reconcile them? We think so, and



that a very simple one. Let us first reflect upon the story as told in the Acts. St. Luke is giving a rapid history, a survey of St. Paul's life of public activity. He is not telling the story of his inner spiritual experiences, his conflicts, temptations, trials, revelations, as St. Paul himself set them forth. He knew not of them, in fact. St. Luke knew merely the exterior public life of which man had cognisance. He knew nothing, or but little, of the interior life of the Apostle, known only to himself and to God. St. Luke therefore tells us of his early work at Damascus. St. Paul himself tells us of that early work, but also shows us how he was prepared for that work by his retirement into Arabia. Both agree in the main point, however, and place the scene of his earliest Christian efforts in the very spot, Damascus, which he had in his human prevision destined for himself as the field of his bitterest antagonism to the faith of the Crucified. This is an important point. St. Luke wrote his historical narrative twenty-five years or thereabouts after St. Paul's conversion. He may have often visited Damascus. Tradition makes Antioch, a town of the same district, his birthplace. St. Luke must have had abundant opportunities of consulting witnesses who could tell the story of those eventful days, and could describe St. Paul's earliest testimony to his new convictions. But these men only knew St. Paul as he appeared in public. They may have known very little of the inner history of his life as he reveals it in his Epistle to the Galatians when vindicating his apostolic authority and mission.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> St. Luke's informants, twenty-five years after the events, would naturally only remember the leading points, the most striking events of St. Paul's early Christian career. Few people realise how hard it is to



Let us now see whether we cannot harmonise St. Paul's autobiographical narrative in the Epistle with the Evangelist's narrative in the Acts; always remembering, however, that an imperfect knowledge is never more completely felt than in such cases. When we try to harmonise an account written from the subjective side by one individual with an objective and exterior narrative written by some one else, we are like a man looking at a globe and trying to take it all in at one glance. One side must be hidden from him; and so in this case, many circumstances are necessarily concealed from us which would solve difficulties that now completely puzzle us. But let us to our task, in which we have derived much assistance from the commentary of Bishop Lightfoot upon Galatians. St. Paul, we are told in ch. ix. 19, received meat after the visit of Ananias and was strengthened. St. Paul was never one of those high-wrought fanatics who despise food and the care of the body. There was nothing of the Gnostic or the Manichean about him, leading him to despise and neglect the body which the Lord has given to be the soul's instrument. He recognised under all circumstances that if the human spirit is to do its work, and if God's glory is to be promoted, the human body must be sustained in

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recall the events of twenty-five years ago in anything like consecutive order. We preserve upon the whole a lively and a true impression; but till we go and consult documents, diaries, journals, etc., it is almost impossible to state the succession of events in accurate order. I was trying the other day to recall the events of my own public life twenty-five years ago anent the controversy which raged about the disestablishment of the Irish Church, into which I plunged with the vehemence of early manhood, and I failed to distinguish events which must have been separated by months and even by years. How much more easily must others have failed accurately to follow details of St. Paul's life known only to himself!

force and vigour. When he was on board ship and in imminent peril of shipwreck and death, and men thought they should be at their prayers, thinking of the next world alone, he took bread and blessed and set the crew and passengers alike the healthy example of eating a hearty meal, and thus keeping his body in due preparation for whatever deliverances the Lord might work for them ; and so, too, at Damascus, his spiritual joy and hallowed peace and deep gratitude for his restoration to sight did not prevent him paying due attention to the wants of his body. "He took food, and was strengthened." And now comes the first note of time. "Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway (εὐθέως) he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God." The very same expression is used by St. Paul in Galatians, where, after speaking of his conversion, he says, "Immediately (εὐθέως) I conferred not with flesh and blood, but went away into Arabia, and again returned unto Damascus." Now my explanation, and not mine alone, but that of Bishop Lightfoot, is this. After the new convert had rested for a short time at Damascus, he retired into the Sinaitic desert, where he remained for several months, perhaps for a whole year. During this period he disappeared from the sight and knowledge of men as if the earth had opened its mouth and swallowed him. Then he returned to Damascus and preached with such power that the Jews formed a plot against his life, enlisting the help of the governor on their side, so that even the gates were watched that he might be arrested. He escaped their hands, however, through the assistance of his converts, and went up to Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Lewin, in his *St. Paul*, vol. i., p. 72, argues that the governor

But here another difficulty arises. The Acts tells us that "when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple," whereupon Barnabas, fulfilling his office of mediation, explanation, and consolation, took him and introduced him to the Apostles; while on the other hand in the first chapter of Galatians St. Paul himself speaks of his first visit to the Jerusalem Church thus: "Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and tarried with him fifteen days. But other of the Apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother." Now the difficulty consists in this. First, how could the disciples at Jerusalem have been suspicious of St. Paul, if at least a year and a half had elapsed since his conversion? for the Jewish method of counting time would not require three whole years to have elapsed since that event. Secondly, how could Barnabas have brought him to the Apostles as the Acts states, if St. Paul himself says he saw none of them save Peter and James? As to the first difficulty, we acknowledge at once that it seems at first sight a very considerable one, and yet a little reflection will show that there are many explanations of it. If St. Paul kept quiet, as we believe he did, after his conversion and baptism, and departed into the solitudes of Arabia, and then upon his return to Damascus, perhaps

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or ethnarch, as he is called by St. Paul in 2 Cor. xi. 32, was the Jewish chief magistrate of Damascus, appointed to that post by Aretas, King of Petra, who then held Damascus. The Jews were allowed by the Romans to have chief magistrates of their own wherever they lived in large colonies. At Alexandria, for instance, where they occupied a large portion of the city, the Jews were ruled by an Alabarch. Mr. Lewin shows in the same place a picture of the exact spot in the walls where St. Paul is by tradition said to have escaped.

after a year's retirement, began his aggressive work, there may not have been time for the Church at large to get knowledge of the facts. Communication, again, may have been interrupted because of the contest between Herod and Aretas, in which Damascus played no small part. Communication may not have been possible between the two Churches.<sup>1</sup> Then, again, the persecution raised by Saul himself seems to have practically extirpated the Jerusalem Church for a time. "They were all scattered abroad except the Apostles," is the account given of the Christian community at Jerusalem. The terror of that persecution may have lasted many a long month. Numbers of the original members may never have ventured back again to the Holy City. The Jerusalem Church may have been a new formation largely composed of new converts who never had heard of a wondrous circumstance which had happened a year or two before to the high priest's delegate, which the Sanhedrin would doubtless desire to keep secret.<sup>2</sup>

These and many other considerations offer themselves when we strive to throw ourselves back into the circumstances of the time and help to a solution of the first difficulty which we have indicated. Human life is such a complex thing that the strangest combinations may

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<sup>1</sup> All thought about Saul and his doings may just then have been swallowed up in the national excitement about Caligula and his attempt to set up his statue in the Temple. The trouble connected with the Nazarene sect would seem to every true Jew but a small matter compared with the outrage to Jehovah threatened by the mad emperor. See more about this in the next chapter.

<sup>2</sup> It is expressly said in Acts ix. 26 that when Saul came to Jerusalem he tried to join himself to the *disciples*. They, knowing only of his record as a persecutor, were afraid of him. Then Barnabas took him and brought him to the *apostles*.

easily find place therein. In this particular case we are so ignorant of the facts, so many hypotheses offer themselves to account for the seeming inconsistencies, that we hesitate not to identify the visit to Jerusalem mentioned in the Acts with that recorded by St. Paul in the Epistle to the Galatians. The second difficulty to which we have alluded is this, How could Barnabas have brought him to the Apostles, if St. Paul himself states that he saw none of the Apostles save Peter and James the Lord's brother? We must remember, however, that St. Luke and St. Paul wrote with two distinct objects. St. Paul, in the Galatians, wished to show the independence of his revelations as regards the Apostles of the circumcision, the Twelve technically so called. Of these Apostles he saw not one, save St. Peter. St. Luke is giving a broad external account of the new convert's earliest religious history, and he tells us that on his first visit to the Holy City his conversion was acknowledged and guaranteed by the apostles,—not the Twelve merely, but the apostles, that is, the senior members of the Christian community, embracing not merely the original company chosen by Christ, but all the senior members of the Church, like Barnabas, James, and others who may have formed a supreme council to guide the affairs of the infant society. The word apostle, in fact, is used very variously in the New Testament; sometimes in a limited sense as confined to the Twelve, sometimes in a wider and more general sense, embracing men like Barnabas, as in Acts xiv. 4, 14; St. James, the Lord's brother, as in 1 Cor. xv. 7; Andronicus and Junias, as in Rom. xvi. 7, and many others. It is quite possible, then, that Barnabas may have brought Saul to the Apostolic council, and told there the tale of his conver-

sion though not one of the original Twelve was present save St. Peter.<sup>1</sup>

We have now endeavoured to explain some of the difficulties which a comparison of St. Paul's own autobiographical narrative with the Acts discloses. Let us look again at the retirement into Arabia. This retirement seems to us full of instruction and pregnant with meaning for the hidden as well as the practical life of the soul. St. Paul as soon as he was baptized retired into Arabia; and why, it may be asked, did he retire thither? Some of the ancient expositors, as St. Chrysostom and St. Jerome, both of whom wrote about the same period, A.D. 400, thought that St. Paul retired into Arabia in order that he might preach to the Arabians. St. Chrysostom, for instance, comments thus: "See how fervent was his soul, he was eager to occupy lands yet untilled. He forthwith attacked a barbarous and savage people, choosing a life of conflict and of much toil." And the explanations of Hilary, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret, and Œcumenius, all of them ancient and acute expositors, are of exactly the same character. Now this would have been a reversal of the Divine order in one important aspect. The power of the keys, the office of opening the kingdom of heaven to the Gentiles had been committed to St. Peter by Jesus Christ. He had not as yet baptized Cornelius, and thus formally opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. If St. Paul had preached to the Arabians, he would have usurped St. Peter's place and function. We believe, on the other hand, that God led

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<sup>1</sup> See Bishop Lightfoot's dissertation upon St. Paul's first visit to Jerusalem, and the use of the term apostle in the New Testament in his *Commentary on Galatians*, pp. 91-101. Cf. Volume I. of this Commentary, p. 348.

the converted persecutor into the deserts of Arabia for very different purposes. Let us note a few of them.

The Lord led Saul there for the purpose of quiet and retirement. The great commentators and expositors of the early Church, as we have already noted, used to call St. Paul by the special title of "*Vas Electionis*," the chosen vessel *par excellence*, chosen because surpassing in his gifts and graces and achievements all the other Apostles. Now it was with the "*Vas Electionis*" in the New Testament as with many of his types in the Old Testament. When God would prepare Moses for his life's work in shepherding, ruling, and guiding His people through the deserts of Arabia, He first called him for many a long day into retirement to the Mount of Horeb and the solitudes of the Sinaitic desert. When God would strengthen and console the spirit depressed, wounded and severely smitten, of his servant Elijah, He brought him to the same mysterious spot, and there restored his moral and spiritual tone, and equipped him with new strength for his warfare by the visions of the Almighty lovingly vouchsafed to him. The Founder or Former of the Jewish Dispensation and the Reformer of the same Dispensation were prepared and sustained for their work amid the solitudes of the Arabian deserts; and what more fitting place in which the "*Vas Electionis*," the chosen vessel of the New Dispensation, should be trained? What more suitable locality where the Lord Jesus should make those fuller and completer revelations of Christian doctrine and mystery which his soul needed, than there where lightning-blasted cliff and towering mountains all alike spoke of God and of His dealings with mankind in the mysterious ages of a




long-departed past? The Lord thus taught St. Paul, and through him teaches the Church of every age, the need of seasons of retirement and communion with God preparatory to and in close connexion with any great work or scene of external activity, such as St. Paul was now entering upon. It is a lesson much needed by this age of ours when men are tempted to think so much of practical work which appears at once in evidence, making its presence felt in tangible results, and so very little of devotional work and spiritual retirement which cannot be estimated by any earthly standard or tabulated according to our modern methods. Men are now inclined to think *laborare est orare*, and that active external work faithfully and vigorously rendered can take the place and supply the want of prayer and thought, of quiet study and devout meditation. Against such a tendency the Lord's dealings with St. Paul, yea more, the Divine dealings with and leadings of the eternal Son Himself, form a loud and speaking protest. The world was perishing and men were going down to the grave in darkness and Satan and sin were triumphing, and yet Jesus was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness for forty days, and Saul was brought out into the deserts of Arabia from amid the teeming crowds of Damascus that he might learn those secrets of the Divine life which are best communicated to those who wait upon God in patient prayer and holy retirement. This is a lesson very necessary for this hot and fitful and feverish age of ours, when men are in such a hurry to have everything set right and every abuse destroyed all at once. Their haste is not after the Divine model, and their work cannot expect the stability and solidity we find in God's. The nineteenth-century extreme is reproved by St. Paul's

retirement into Arabia.<sup>1</sup> Man is, however, such a creature that if he avoids one extreme he generally tumbles into another. And so it is in this matter. Men have been ready to push this matter of retirement into an extreme, and have considered that they were following St. Paul's example in retiring into the Arabian and similar deserts and remaining there. But they have made a great mistake. St. Paul retired into Arabia for a while, and then "returned again unto Damascus." They have retired into the deserts and have remained there engaged in the one selfish task of saving their own souls, as they thought, by the exercises of prayer and meditation, apart from that life of active good works for the sake of others which constitutes another department of Christianity equally vital to the health of the soul.

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<sup>1</sup> We may apply this typical fact in primitive Church history in a very modern direction. It would be very well if candidates for the sacred ministry always imitated St. Paul's departure into Arabia. I have known a great many promising careers spoiled because young deacons would select a heavy, laborious town or city charge for the opening work of their ministry. They know nothing of life or the world. They know nothing of preaching or pastoral work. They have, too, all their mistakes to make, and they select the most public place for their perpetration. But this is not the worst. They form habits of busy idleness and of mental dissipation which never leave them. The first two or three years of a young clergyman's life generally determine his whole career. His life never recovers the effect of the initial movement. I think the great outcry, in the Church of England at least, against sermons largely owing to the decay of study resulting from premature activity on the part of the junior clergy. Premature development in any direction is ever followed by premature decay, and when a young priest or deacon is engaged every day and every night in the week from an early service at 8 a.m. till night-school is finished at 10 p.m. in external work, how can he prepare for teaching an educated congregation on Sundays? And surely there ought to be some little consideration for thinking men and educated women as well as for others.



The history of Eastern monasticism is marked from its earliest days by an eager desire to follow St. Paul in his retirement into Arabia, and an equal disinclination to return with him unto Damascus. And this characteristic, this intense devotion to a life of solitude strangely enough passed over to our own Western islands, and is a dominant feature of the monasticism which prevailed in Great Britain and Ireland in the days of Celtic Christianity. The Syrian and Egyptian monks passed over to Lerins and Southern Gaul, whence their disciples came to England and Ireland, where they established themselves, bringing with them all their Eastern love of solitary deserts. This taste they perpetuated, as may be seen especially on the western coast of Ireland, where the ruins of extensive monastic settlements still exist, testifying to this craving. The last islands, for instance, which a traveller sees as he steams away from Cork to America, are called the Skelligs. They are ten miles west of the Kerry coast, and yet there on these rocks where a boat cannot land sometimes for months together the early monks of the fifth and six centuries established themselves as in a desert in the ocean. The topography of Ireland is full of evidences and witnesses of this desire to imitate the Apostle of the Gentiles in his Arabian retirement. There are dozens of town lands—subdivisions of the parishes—which are called deserts or diserts,<sup>1</sup> because they constituted solitudes set apart for hermit life after the example of St. Paul in Arabia and John the Baptist in the deserts of Judæa. While, again, when we turn northwards along the western seaboard of Ireland, we shall find numerous islands

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<sup>1</sup> See Joyce's *Irish Names of Places*, vol. i., p. 335.

like the Skelligs, Ardoilen or the High Island, off the coast of Connemara, and Innismurry off the Sligo coast, where hermit cells in the regular Egyptian and Syrian fashion were built, and still exist as they did a thousand years ago, testifying to the longing of the human mind for such complete solitude and close communion with God as Saul enjoyed when he departed from Damascus.<sup>1</sup> The monks of ancient times may have run into one extreme: well would it be for us if we could avoid the other, and learn to cultivate self-communion, meditation, self-examination, and that realisation of the eternal world which God grants to those who wait upon Him apart from the bustle and din and dust of earth, which clog the spiritual senses and dim the heavenly vision.

We can see many other reasons why Paul was led into Arabia. He was led there, for instance, that he might make a thorough scrutiny of his motives. Silence, separation, solitude, have a wondrous tendency to make a man honest with himself and humbly honest before his God. Saul might have been a hypocrite or a formalist elsewhere, where human eyes and jealous glances were bent upon him, but scarcely when there alone with Jehovah in the desert. Again, Saul was led

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<sup>1</sup> I have touched upon the subject of the connexion between Syria and Egypt and Oriental monasticism on the one hand, and Gaul, England, and Ireland on the other, during the period which elapsed between A.D. 400 and 900, in *Ireland and the Celtic Church*, chs. ix. and xi. I have discussed it at greater length and with fuller details in two papers upon the Knowledge of Greek in Gaul and Ireland, read before the Royal Irish Academy in February 1892, now published in the Proceedings of that body; and also in two papers, one upon the Island Monasteries of Great Britain and Ireland and the other on St. Fechin of Fore, published, the former in the Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland for 1891, and the latter in the same Journal for April 1st, 1892.

there that his soul might be ennobled and enlarged by the power of magnificent scenery, of high and hallowed associations. Mountain and cliff and flood, specially those which have been magnified and made honourable by grand memories such as must have crowded upon Saul's mind, have a marvellous effect, enlarging, widening, developing, upon a soul like Saul's, long cribbed, cabined, and confined within the rigorous bonds of Pharisaic religionism. Saul, too, was led up into those mysterious regions away from the busy life and work, the pressing calls of Damascus, that he might speak a word in season to us all, and especially to those young in the Christian life, who think in the first burst of their zeal and faith as if they had nothing to do but go in and possess the whole land. Saul did not set out at once to evangelise the masses of Damascus, or to waste the first weak beginnings of his spiritual life in striving to benefit or awaken others. He was first led away into the deserts of Arabia, in order that there he might learn of the deep things of God and of the weak things of his own nature, and then, when God had developed his spiritual strength, He led him back to Damascus that he might testify out of the fulness of a heart which knew the secrets of the Most High. The teaching of Saul's example speaks loudly to us all. It was the same with Saul as with a greater than he. The Eternal Son Himself was trained amid years and years of darkness and secrecy, and even after His baptism the day of His manifestation unto Israel was delayed yet a little. Jesus Christ was no novice when He came preaching. And Saul of Tarsus was no novice in the Christian life when he appeared as the Christian advocate in the synagogue of Damascus. Well would it have been for many a

soul had this Divine example been more closely copied. Again and again have the young and ignorant and inexperienced been encouraged to stand up as public teachers, immediately after they have been seriously impressed. They have yielded to the unwise solicitation. The vanity of the human heart has seconded the foolish advice given to them, and they have tried to declare the deep things of God when as yet they have need of learning the very first principles of the doctrine of Christ. Is it any wonder that such persons oftentimes make shipwreck of faith and a sound conscience? Truth is very large and wide and spacious, and requires much time and thought if it is to be assimilated; and even when truth is grasped in all its mighty fulness, then there are spiritual enemies within and without and spiritual pitfalls to be avoided which can be known only by experience. Woe is then to that man who is not assisted by grace and guided by Divine experience, and who knows not God and the powers of the world to come, and the devious paths of his own heart, as these things can only be known and learned as Saul of Tarsus knew and learned them in the deserts of Arabia. There was marvellous wisdom contained in the brief apostolic law enacted for candidates for holy orders in words gathered from St. Paul's own personal history, "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil."

## CHAPTER V.

### *THE FIRST GENTILE CONVERT.*

“Now there was a certain man in Cæsarea, Cornelius by name, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. He saw in a vision openly, as it were about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in unto him, and saying to him, Cornelius. And he, fastening his eyes upon him, and being affrighted, said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are gone up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and fetch one Simon, who is surnamed Peter : he lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side.”—ACTS x. 1-6.

WE have now arrived at another crisis in the history of the early Church of Christ. The Day of Pentecost, the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, the call of Cornelius, and the foundation of the Gentile Church of Antioch are, if we are to pick and choose amid the events related by St. Luke, the turning-points of the earliest ecclesiastical history. The conversion of St. Paul is placed by St. Luke before the conversion of Cornelius, and is closely connected with it. Let us then inquire by what events St. Luke unites the two. German commentators of the modern school, who are nothing unless they are original, have not been willing to allow that St. Luke's narrative is continuous. They have assigned various dates to the conversion of Cornelius. Some have made it precede the conversion of St. Paul, others have fixed it to the



time of Paul's sojourn in Arabia, and so on, without any other solid reasons than what their own fancies suggest. I prefer, however, to think that St. Luke's narrative follows the great broad outlines of the Christian story, and sets forth the events of the time in a divinely ordered sequence. At any rate I prefer to follow the course of events as the narrative suggests them, till I see some good reason to think otherwise. I do not think that the mere fact that the sacred writer states events in a certain order is a sufficient reason to think that the true order must have been quite a different one. Taking them in this light they yield themselves very naturally to the work of an expositor. Let us reflect then upon that sequence as here set forth for us.

Saul of Tarsus went up to Jerusalem to confer with St. Peter, who had been hitherto the leading spirit of the apostolic conclave. He laboured in Jerusalem among the Hellenistic synagogues for some fifteen days. A conspiracy was then formed against his life. The Lord, ever watchful over His chosen servant, warned him to depart from Jerusalem, indicating to him as he prayed in the Temple the scope and sphere of his future work, saying, "Depart: for I will send thee forth far hence unto the Gentiles" (see Acts xxii. 21). The Christians of Jerusalem, having learned the designs of his enemies, conveyed Saul to Cæsarea, the chief Roman port of Palestine, whence they despatched him to Cilicia, his native province, where he laboured in obscurity and quietness for some time. St. Peter may have been one of the rescue party who saved Saul from the hands of his enemies escorting him to Cæsarea, and this circumstance may have led him to the western district of the country. At

any rate we find him soon after labouring in Western Palestine at some distance from Jerusalem. Philip the Evangelist had been over the same ground a short time previously, and St. Peter may have been sent forth by the mother Church to supervise his work and confer that formal imposition of hands which from the beginning has formed the completion of baptism, and seems to have been reserved to the Apostles or their immediate delegates. Peter's visit to Western Palestine, to Lydda and Sharon and Joppa, may have been just like the visit he had paid some time previously, in company with St. John, to the city of Samaria, when he came for the first time in contact with Simon Magus. St. Luke gives us here a note of time helping us to fix approximately the date of the formal admission of Cornelius and the Gentiles into the Church. He mentions that the Churches then enjoyed peace and quietness all through Palestine, enabling St. Peter to go upon his work of preaching and supervision. It may perhaps strike some persons that this temporary peace must have been attained through the conversion of Saul, the most active persecutor. But that event had happened more than two years before, in the spring of 37 A.D., and, far from diminishing, would probably have rather intensified the hostility of the Jewish hierarchy. It was now the autumn of the year 39, and a bitter spirit still lingered at Jerusalem, as Saul himself and the whole Church had just proved. External authorities, Jewish and Roman history, here step in to illustrate and confirm the sacred narrative.

The Emperor Caius Caligula, who ascended the throne of the empire about the time of Stephen's martyrdom, was a strange character. He was wholly

self-willed, madly impious, utterly careless of human life, as indeed unregenerate mankind ever is. Christianity alone has taught the precious value of the individual human soul the awful importance of human life as the probation time for eternity, and has thereby ameliorated the harshness of human laws, the sternness of human rulers, ready to inflict capital punishment on any pretence whatsoever. Caligula determined to establish the worship of himself throughout the world. He had no opposition to dread from the pagans, who were ready to adopt any creed or any cult, no matter how degrading, which their rulers prescribed. Caligula knew, however, that the Jews were more obstinate, because they alone were conscious that they possessed a Divine revelation. He issued orders, therefore, to Petronius, the Roman governor of Syria, Palestine, and the East, to erect his statue in Jerusalem and to compel the Jews to offer sacrifice thereto. Josephus tells us of the opposition which the Jews offered to Caligula; how they abandoned their agricultural operations and assembled in thousands at different points, desiring Petronius to slay them at once, as they could never live if the Divine laws were so violated. The whole energies of the nation were for months concentrated on this one object, the repeal of the impious decree of Caligula, which they at last attained through their own determination and by the intervention of Herod Agrippa, who was then at Rome.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See the whole story told at length in Josephus, *Antiquities*, Book XVIII., ch. viii., 8, and in his *Wars*, Book II., ch. x. This story, which is little known to Bible students, is most interesting. It fully explains the repose from persecution which the Church enjoyed at the time of the conversion of Cornelius and helps us to fix its date. In the year 39 Petronius, the prefect of Syria, received orders from the Emperor Caligula to set up his statue as a god in the Temple. He advanced to

It was during this awful period of uncertainty and opposition that the infant Church enjoyed a brief period of repose and quiet growth, because the whole nation from the high priest to the lowest beggar had something else to think of than how to persecute a new sect that was as yet rigorously scrupulous in observing the law of Moses. During this period of repose from persecution St. Peter made his tour of inspection "throughout all parts," Samaria, Galilee, Judæa, terminating with Lydda, where he healed, or at least

fulfil the Emperor's command with two legions and a number of auxiliary troops, and came as far as Ptolemais, a maritime town of Galilee, which is mentioned in Acts xxi. 7 as a place where St. Paul visited a Church, of which we hear nothing else. The Jewish nation met the prefect there in tens of thousands, entreating him to desist or else to put them to immediate death. He halted his army and appointed a further conference at Tiberias, where the people met him and continued their entreaties for fifty days, though it was seed-time and a famine might result from their neglect of the spring operations. Petronius suspended his operations for the time, and wrote back to the Emperor an account of the Jewish opposition. Herod Agrippa too, who was then at Rome and in high favour with the Emperor, lent his assistance, and obtained a temporary respite for the Jews by a timely and expensive banquet which he prepared for him. Towards the close of A.D. 40 Caligula, however, determined to set out and personally compel the obedience of the Jews. But his assassination in January 41 relieved their apprehensions, and freed the world from Caligula's mad freaks. During that period of anxiety, lasting fully a year and a half, the Jews had neither time nor thought for the new sect, which was opposed as strongly as themselves to the Emperor's impious projects and whose members doubtless flung themselves as heartily into the opposition. The Jews at Alexandria suffered at the same time a terrible persecution, of which Philo and Josephus tell : see Mommsen's *Provinces of the Roman Empire*, vol. ii., pp. 190-96 (Dickson's Translation). This is one of those incidental touches which prove the wonderful accuracy of this book of the Acts. Dr. Lightfoot has remarked (*Essays on Supernatural Religion*) that no book of the Bible has so many points of contact with current history and politics as the Acts, and can therefore be more easily tested. This special case is an interesting illustration of the learned bishop's view.

prayed for the healing of, Æneas,<sup>1</sup> and with Joppa, where his prayer was followed by the restoration of Tabitha or Dorcas, who has given a designation now widely applied to the assistance which devout women can give to their poorer sisters in Christ.

We thus see how God by the secret guidance of His Spirit, shaping his course by ways and roads known only to Himself, led St. Peter to the house of Simon the tanner, where he abode many days waiting in patience to know God's mind and will which were soon to be opened out to him. We have now traced the line of events which connect the conversion of Saul of Tarsus with that of Cornelius the centurion of Cæsarea. Let us apply ourselves to the circumstances surrounding the latter event, which is of such vital importance to us Gentile Christians as having been the formal Divine proclamation to the Church and to the world that the mystery which had been hid for ages was now made manifest, and that the Gentiles were spiritually on an equality with the Jews. The Church was now about to burst the bonds which had restrained it for five years at least. We stand by the birth of European Christendom and of modern civilisation. It is well, then, that we should learn and inwardly digest every, even the slightest, detail concerning such a transcendent and notable crisis. Let us take them briefly one by one as the sacred narrative reports them.

I. I note, then, in the first place that the *time* of this conversion was wisely and providentially chosen. The time was just about eight years after the Ascension and

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<sup>1</sup> Perhaps it is well to note that this is not the classical word Æneas, which in Greek would be represented by *Aínelas*, but a different name with a short *e*, and is written in Greek *Aivéas*. The latter is found in Thucydides and Xenophon: see Meyer *in loco*.

the foundation of the Church. Time enough therefore had elapsed for Christianity to take root among the Jews. This was most important. The gospel was first planted among the Jews, took form and life and shape, gained its initial impulse and direction among God's ancient people in order that the constitution, the discipline, and the worship of the Church might be framed on the ancient Jewish model and might be built up by men whose minds were cast in a conservative mould. Not that we have the old law with its wearisome and burdensome ritual perpetuated in the Christian Church. That law was a yoke too heavy for man to bear. But, then, the highest and best elements of the old Jewish system have been perpetuated in the Church. There was in Judaism by God's own appointment a public ministry, a threefold public ministry too, exercised by the high priest, the priests, and the Levites. There is in Christianity a threefold ministry exercised by bishops, presbyters or elders, and deacons.<sup>1</sup> There were in Judaism public and consecrated sanctuaries, fixed liturgies, public reading of God's Word, a service of choral worship, hymns of joy and thanksgiving, the sacraments of Holy Communion and baptism in a rudimentary shape; all these were transferred from the old system that was passing away into the new system that was taking its place. Had the Gentiles been admitted much earlier all this might not have so easily happened. Men do not easily change

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<sup>1</sup> I do not intend to raise any disputed question as to Church polity and government in this book, and so I may point out, without compromising my own views in the least, that even a Presbyterian may agree in this statement, as he may hold that his own teaching elder or minister corresponds to the primitive bishop, his ruling elders to the presbyters, and his own deacons to the ancient deacons. Presbyterianism claims thus a threefold ministry as well as Episcopacy.



their habits. Habits, indeed, are chains which rivet themselves year by year with ever-increasing power round our natures; and the Jewish converts brought their habits of thought and worship into the Church of Christ, establishing there those institutions of prayer and worship, of sacramental communion and preaching which we still enjoy. But we must observe, on the other hand, that, had the Gentiles been admitted a little later, the Church might have assumed too Jewish and Levitical an aspect. This pause of eight years, during which Jews alone formed the Church, is another instance of those delays of the Lord<sup>1</sup> which, whether they happen in public or in private life, are always found in the long run to be wise, blessed, and providential things, though for a time they may seem dark and mysterious, according to that ancient strain of the Psalmist, "Wait on the Lord, . . . and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, upon the Lord."<sup>2</sup>

II. Again, the *place* where the Church burst its Jewish shell and emerged into full gospel freedom is noteworthy. It was at Cæsarea. It is a great pity that people do not make more use of maps in their study of

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<sup>1</sup> What a fine subject for historical study the delays of the Lord would prove. The delay of the Incarnation till the world was ready is a supreme instance of them. The delay of the triumph of Christianity, of the break up of the Roman Empire, of the Reformation so often attempted but never effected till the invention of printing and the revival of learning,—these and numerous other illustrations fling light upon the darkness which still surrounds the Divine methods and dispensations amid which we live.

<sup>2</sup> This and several other thoughts in this chapter will be found worked out in a sermon of Bishop Jebb, a well-known preacher of the last generation who is now almost forgotten. Yet he published several volumes of sermons and other theological works, which had no small influence in laying the foundations of the Oxford movement. His sermons are full of matter, though not composed in a modern style.



Holy Scripture. Sunday evenings are often a dull time in Christian households, and the bare mechanical reading of Scripture and of good books often only makes them duller. How much livelier, interesting, and instructive they would be were an attempt made to trace the journeys of the apostles with a map, or to study the scenes where they laboured—Jerusalem, Cæsarea, Damascus, Ephesus, Athens, and Rome—with some of the helps which modern scholarship and commercial enterprise now place within easy reach. I can speak thus with the force of personal experience, for my own keen interest in this book which I am expounding dates from the Sunday evenings of boyhood thus spent, though without many of the aids which now lie within the reach of all. This is essentially the modern method of study, especially in matters historical. A modern investigator and explorer of Bible sites and lands has well expressed this truth when he said, "Topography is the foundation of history. If we are ever to understand history, we must understand the places where that history was transacted."<sup>1</sup> The celebrated historians the late Mr. Freeman and Mr. Green worked a revolution in English historical methods by teaching people that an indefatigable

This cannot be wondered at when we find from his well-known correspondence with Alexander Knox that a single sermon sometimes was the work of several months, if not even years. The leisurely character of even busy lives in the opening years of this century is strikingly illustrated by the correspondence between these learned men. Bishop Jebb preached a sermon in 1804 on the well-known Vincentian rule of faith, "Quod semper, quod ubique, etc." This sermon he elaborated till 1815, and then published it. It played no small part in religious controversies between 1815 and 1840, as a reference to the *Christian Observer*, the *Christian Examiner*, and other religious periodicals of that time will show.

<sup>1</sup> See Ramsay's *Historical Geography of Asia Minor*, pp. 51, 52.

use of maps and a careful study of the physical features of any country are absolutely needful for a true conception of its history. In this respect at least secular history and sacred history are alike. Without a careful study of the map we cannot understand God's dealings with the Church of Christ, as is manifest from the case of Cæsarea at which we have arrived. The narratives of the Gospels and of the Acts will be confused, unintelligible, unless we understand that there were two Cæsareas in Palestine, one never mentioned in the Gospels, the other never mentioned in the Acts. Cæsarea Philippi was a celebrated city of North-eastern Palestine. It was when our Lord was within its borders that St. Peter made his celebrated confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," told of in St. Matthew xvi. 13-16. This is the only Cæsarea of which we hear in the Gospels. It was an inland town, built by the Herods in joint honour of themselves and of their patrons the Emperors of Rome, and bore all the traces of its origin. It was decorated with a splendid pagan temple, was a thoroughly pagan town, and was therefore abhorred by every true Jew. There was another Cæsarea, the great Roman port of Palestine and the capital, where the Roman governors resided. It was situated in the borders of Phœnicia, in a north-westerly direction from Jerusalem, with which it was connected by a fine military road.<sup>1</sup> This Cæsarea had been originally built

<sup>1</sup> The most detailed account of Cæsarea-on-the-Sea, its ruins and present state, will be found in the *Memoirs* of the Survey of Western Palestine, vol. ii., pp. 13-29. It is accompanied with plans and maps, which show that ancient Roman Cæsarea was ten times the size of the mediæval city which the Crusaders occupied. Geikie's *The Holy Land and the Bible*, ch. iv., gives a very interesting account of the ancient and modern state of Cæsarea.

by Herod the Great. He spent twelve years at this undertaking, and succeeded in making it a splendid monument of the magnificence of his conceptions. The seaboard of Palestine is totally devoid to this day of safe harbours. Herod constructed a harbour at vast expense. Let us hear the story of its foundation in the very words of the Jewish historian. Josephus tells us that Herod, observing "that Joppa and Dora are not fit for havens on account of the impetuous south winds which beat upon them, which, rolling the sands which come from the sea against the shores, do not admit of ships lying in their station ; but the merchants are generally there forced to ride at their anchors in the sea itself. So Herod endeavoured to rectify this inconvenience, and laid out such a compass toward the land as might be sufficient for a haven, wherein the great ships might lie in safety ; and this he effected by letting down vast stones of above fifty feet in length, not less than eighteen in breadth and nine in depth, into twenty fathoms deep."<sup>1</sup> The Romans, when they took possession of Palestine, adopted and developed Herod's plans, and established Cæsarea on the coast as the permanent residence of the procurator of Palestine. And it was a wise policy. The Romans, like the English, had a genius for government. They fixed their provincial capitals upon or near the sea-coast that their communications might be ever kept open. Thus in our own case Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Capetown, Quebec, and Dublin are all seaport towns. And so in ancient times Antioch, Alexandria, Tarsus, Ephesus, Marseilles,

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<sup>1</sup> See Josephus, *Antiquities*, XV. ix. 6 ; *Wars of Jews*, I. xxi. Mr. Lewin, in his *Life of St. Paul*, vol. ii., ch. iv., spends several pages in an elaborate discussion of the buildings and plan of Cæsarea, to which it must here suffice to refer.

Corinth, London, were all seaports and provincial Roman capitals as Cæsarea was in Palestine. And it was a very wise policy. The Jews were a fierce, bold, determined people when they revolted. If the seat of Roman rule had been fixed at Jerusalem, a rebellion might completely cut off all effective relief from the besieged garrison, which would never happen at Cæsarea so long as the command of the sea was vested in the vast navies which the Roman State possessed. Cæsarea was to a large extent a Gentile city, though within some seventy miles of Jerusalem. It had a considerable Jewish population with their attendant synagogues, but the most prominent features were pagan temples, one of them serving for a lighthouse and beacon for the ships which crowded its harbour, together with a theatre and an amphitheatre, where scenes were daily enacted from which every sincere Jew must have shrunk with horror. Such was the place—a most fitting place, Gentile, pagan, idolatrous to the very core and centre—where God chose to reveal Himself as Father of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews, and showed Christ's gospel as a light to lighten the Gentiles as well as the glory of His people Israel.

III. Then, again, the *person* chosen as the channel of this revelation is a striking character. He was "Cornelius by name, a centurion of the band called the Italian band."<sup>1</sup> Here, then, we note first of all that

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<sup>1</sup> Cornelius was a centurion of the Italian band. This is another of the accidental coincidences which attest the genuineness of the Acts. The Roman army was divided into two broad divisions, the legions and the auxiliary forces. Now the legions were never permanently quartered in Palestine till the great war which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem, which began in A.D. 66 and ended in A.D. 70. A legion was then for the first time stationed with a fixed camp upon the site of the Holy City: see Mommsen's *Roman Provinces*, ii, 218. The auxiliary forces

Cornelius was a Roman soldier. Let us pause and reflect upon this. In no respect does the New Testament display more clearly its Divine origin than in the manner in which it rises superior to mere provincialism. There are no narrow national prejudices about it like those which nowadays lead Englishmen to despise other nations, or those which in ancient times led a thorough-going Jew to look down with sovereign contempt on the Gentile world as mere dogs and outcasts. The New Testament taught that all men were equal and were brothers in blood, and thus laid the founda-

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were a kind of militia raised upon the spot. Palestine was made a province of the second rank in A.D. 6, and from that time to the year 66 was garrisoned, like all second-rank provinces, exclusively by auxiliary troops, the headquarters of which were at Cæsarea. These auxiliaries, recruited amongst the Samaritans and Syrian Greeks, numbered one ala and five cohorts, about three thousand men : see Mommsen, *loc. cit.*, p. 186. It would not have been prudent, however, to have a garrison in Palestine exclusively composed of troops locally recruited, even though restricted to Samaritans and Syrians, just as no prudent English government would garrison Ireland with a militia drawn from Ulster Orangemen alone. The Roman Government therefore mingled with the garrison of Cæsarea an auxiliary cohort composed of Italians. There were thirty-two Italian auxiliary cohorts which were thus used as a salutary precaution against treachery on the part of the local militia. See, on this interesting point, Marquardt, *L'Organisation Militaire chez les Romains*, p. 189 (French Edition), where this learned German writer often quotes the Acts of the Apostles to illustrate the military arrangements in Palestine during the first sixty years of the first century. Such was the military organisation of Palestine from A.D. 6 to 66. After that period Palestine was ruled in the sternest military manner, and treated like a border province subject to martial law with legionaries scattered all over it. Now if the Acts were written in the beginning of the second century, a writer would almost certainly have missed the correct description of the troops stationed at Cæsarea as St. Luke gives it in this passage. See also the article "Exercitus" in the new edition of Smith's *Dictionary of Roman and Greek Antiquities*; Mommsen, on the Roman Legions, in *Ephemeris Epigraphica*, vol. v. and Pfitzner, *Geschichte der Römischen Kaiserlegionen*.

tions of those modern conceptions which have well-nigh swept slavery from the face of civilised Christendom. The New Testament and its teaching is the parent of that modern liberalism which now rules every circle, no matter what its political designation. In no respect does this universal catholic feeling of the New Testament display itself more clearly than in the pictures it presents to us of Roman military men. They are uniformly most favourable. Without one single exception the pictures drawn for us of every centurion and soldier mentioned in the books of the New Testament are bright with some element of good shining out conspicuously by way of favourable contrast, when brought side by side with the Jewish people, upon whom more abundant and more blessed privileges had been in vain lavished. Let us just note a few instances which will illustrate our view. The soldiers sought John's baptism and humbly received John's penitential advice and direction when priests and scribes rejected the Lord's messenger (Luke iii. 14). A soldier and a centurion received Christ's commendation for the exercise of a faith surpassing in its range and spiritual perception any faith which the Master had found within the bounds and limits of Israel according to the flesh. "Verily I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel," were Christ's almost wondering words as He heard the confession of His God-like nature, His Divine power involved in the centurion's prayer of humility, "I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof: but only say the word, and my servant shall be healed" (cf. Matt. viii. 5-13). So was it again with the centurion to whom the details of our Lord's execution were committed. He too is painted in a favourable light. He had an open mind, willing to receive evidence.



He received that evidence under the most unfavourable conditions. His mind was convinced of our Lord's mission and character, not by His triumphs, but by His apparent defeat. As the victim of Jewish malice and prejudice yielded up the ghost and committed His pure, unspotted soul to the hands of His heavenly Father, then it was that, struck by the supernatural spirit of love and gentleness and forgiveness—those great forces of Christianity which never at any other time or in any other age have had their full and fair play—the centurion yielded the assent of his affections and of his intellect to the Divine mission of the suffering Saviour, and cried, "Truly this man was the Son of God" (Matt. xxvii. 54). So it was again with Julius the centurion, who courteously entreated St. Paul on his voyage as a prisoner to Rome (Acts xxvii. 3); and so again it was with Cornelius the centurion, of the band called the Italian band.

Now how comes this to pass? What a striking evidence of the workings and presence of the Divine Spirit in the writers of our sacred books we may find in this fact! The Roman soldiers were of course the symbols to a patriotic Jew of a hated foreign sway, of an idolatrous jurisdiction and rule. A Jew uninfluenced by supernatural grace and unguided by Divine inspiration would never have drawn such pictures of Roman centurions as the New Testament has handed down to us. The pictures, indeed, drawn by the opposition press of any country is not generally a favourable one when dealing with the persons and officials of the dominant party. But the apostles—Jews though they were of narrow, provincial, prejudiced Galilee—had drunk deep of the spirit of the new religion. They recognised that Jesus Christ, the King of the



kingdom of heaven, cared nothing about what form of government men lived under. They knew that Christ ignored all differences of climate, age, sex, nationality, or employment. They felt that the only distinctions recognised in Christ's kingdom were spiritual distinctions, and therefore they recognised the soul of goodness wherever found. They welcomed the honest and true heart, no matter beneath what skin it beat, and found therefore in many of these Roman soldiers some of the ablest, the most devoted, and the most effective servants and teachers of the Cross of Jesus Christ. Verily the universal and catholic principles of the new religion which found their first formal proclamation in the age of Cornelius met with an ample vindication and a full reward in the trophies won and the converts gained from such an unpromising source as the ranks of the Roman army. This seems to me one reason for the favourable notices of the Roman soldiers in the New Testament. The Divine Spirit wished to impress upon mankind that birth, position, or employment have no influence upon a man's state in God's sight, and to prove by a number of typical examples that spiritual conditions and excellence alone avail to find favour with the Almighty.

Another reason, however, may be found for this fact. The Scriptures never make light of discipline or training. "Train up a child in the way he should go" is a Divine precept. St. Paul, in his Pastoral Epistles, lays down as one great qualification for a bishop that he should have this power of exercising discipline and rule at home as well as abroad: "For if he knoweth not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?" (1 Tim. iii. 5). By discipline, the discipline of Egypt and the wilderness, did God

prepare His people for Canaan. By the discipline of captivity and dispersion, by the discipline of Greek philosophy spreading novel intellectual ideas, by the discipline of Roman dominion executing mighty public works, carrying roads and intercommunication to the remotest and most barbarous nations, did God prepare the world for the revelation of His Son. By the discipline of life, by joy and sorrow, by strife and suffering, by parting and by loss, does God still prepare His faithful ones for the beatific vision of eternal beauty, for the rest and joy of everlasting peace. And discipline worked out its usual results on these military men, even though it was only an imperfect and pagan discipline which these Roman soldiers received. Let us note carefully how this was. The world of unregenerate man at the time of our Lord's appearance had become utterly selfish. Discipline of every kind had been flung off. Self-restraint was practically unknown, and the devil and his works flourished in every circle, bringing forth the fruits of wickedness, uncleanness, and impurity in every direction. The army was the only place or region where in those times any kind of discipline or self-restraint was practised. For no army can permit—even if it be an army of atheists—profligacy and drunkenness to rage, flaunting themselves beneath the very eye of the sun. And as the spiritual result we find that this small measure of pagan discipline acted as a preparation for Christianity, and became under the Divine guidance the means of fitting men like Cornelius of Cæsarea for the reception of the gospel message of purity and peace.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “The Roman camps were also the best training-schools for the old-fashioned virtues of faithfulness, straightforwardness, and hardihood ;

But we observe that Cornelius the centurion had one special feature which made him peculiarly fitted to be God's instrument for opening the Christian faith to the Gentile world. The choice of Cornelius is marked by all that skill and prudence, that careful adaptation of means to ends which the Divine workmanship, whether in nature or in grace, ever displays. There were many Roman centurions stationed at Cæsarea, yet none was chosen save Cornelius, and that because he was "a devout man who feared God with all his house, praying to God always, and giving much alms to the people." He feared Jehovah, he fasted, prayed, observed Jewish hours of devotion. His habits were much more those of a devout Jew than of a pagan soldier. He was popular with the Jewish people therefore, like another centurion of whom it was said by the Jewish officials themselves "he loveth our nation and hath built us a synagogue." The selection of Cornelius as the leader and firstfruits of the Gentiles unto God was eminently prudent and wise. God when He is working out His plans chooses His instruments carefully and skilfully. He leaves nothing to chance. He does nothing imperfectly. Work done by God will repay the keenest scrutiny, the closest study, for it is the model of what every man's work in life ought as far as possible to be—earnest, wise, complete, perfect.

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and in them were to be found the best types of the old Roman character, which, as moralists complained, were to be found elsewhere no more. If the funds of a country town had fallen into disorder, or uprightness was needed for a special post, the curator chosen by the Government was often an old soldier, who had long been tried and trusted; and early Christian history throws, incidentally, a favourable light upon the moral qualities of the Roman officer. These qualities were mainly formed by thoroughness of work and discipline."—W. W. CAPES, *The Early Empire*, p. 210.

IV. Again, looking at the whole passage we perceive therein illustrations of two important laws of the Divine life. We recognise in the case of Cornelius the working of that great principle of the kingdom of God often enunciated by the great Master: "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly," "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine"; or, to put it in other language, that God always bestows more grace upon the man who diligently uses and improves the grace which he already possesses; a principle which indeed we see constantly exemplified in things pertaining to this world as well as in matters belonging to the spiritual life. Thus it was with Cornelius. He was what was called among the Jews a proselyte of the gate. These proselytes were very numerous. They were a kind of fringe hanging upon the outskirts of the Jewish people. They were admirers of Jewish ideas, doctrines, and practices, but they were not incorporated with the Jewish nation nor bound by all their laws and ceremonial restraints. The Levitical Law was not imposed upon them because they were not circumcised. They were merely bound to worship the true God and observe certain moral precepts said to have been delivered to Noah.<sup>1</sup> Such was Cornelius whom the providence of God had led from Italy to Cæsarea for this very purpose, to fulfil His purposes of mercy towards the Gentile world. His residence there had taught him the truth and beauty of the pure worship of Jehovah rendered by the Jews. He had learned too, not only that God is, but that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. Cornelius had set himself, there-

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<sup>1</sup> See the article on "Proselytes" in Schaft's *Encyclopædia of Theology*.

fore, to the diligent discharge of all the duties of religion so far as he knew them. He was earnest and diligent in prayer, for he recognised himself as dependent upon an invisible God. He was liberal in alms, for he desired to show forth his gratitude, for mercies daily received. And acting thus he met with the divinely appointed reward. Cornelius is favoured with a fuller revelation and a clearer guidance by the angel's mouth, who tells him to send and summon Peter from Joppa for this very purpose. What an eminently practical lesson we may learn from God's dealings with this earliest Gentile convert! We learn from the Divine dealings with Cornelius that whosoever diligently improves the lower spiritual advantages which he possesses shall soon be admitted to higher and fuller blessings.

It may well have been that God led him through successive stages and rewarded him under each. In distant Italy, when residing amid the abounding superstitions of that country, conscience was the only preacher, but there the sermons of that monitor were heard with reverence and obeyed with diligence. Then God ordered the course of his life so that public duty summoned him to a distant land. Cornelius may have at the time counted his lot a hard one when despatched to Palestine as a centurion, for it was a province where, from the nature of the warfare there prevalent, there were abundant opportunities of death by assassination at the hands of the Zealots, and but few opportunities of distinction such as might be gained in border warfare with foreign enemies. But the Lord was shaping his career, as He shapes all our careers, with reference to our highest spiritual purposes. He led Cornelius, therefore, to a land and to a town where the pure worship of Jehovah was practised and the elevated

morality of Judaism prevailed. Here, then, were new opportunities placed within the centurion's reach. And again the same spiritual diligence is displayed, and again the same law of spiritual development and enlarging blessing finds a place. Cornelius is devout and liberal and God-fearing, and therefore a heavenly visitor directs his way to still fuller light and grander revelations, and Cornelius the centurion of the Italian band leads the Gentile hosts into the fulness of blessing, the true land flowing with milk and honey, found only in the dispensation of Jesus Christ and within the borders of the Church of God. This was God's course of dealing with the Roman centurion, and it is the course which the same loving dealings still pursues with human souls truly desirous of Divine guidance. The Lord imparts one degree of light and knowledge and grace, but withholds higher degrees till full use has been made of the lower. He speaks to us at first in a whisper; but if we reverently hearken, there is a gradual deepening of the voice, till it is as audible in the crowd as it is in the solitude, and we are continually visited with the messages of the Eternal King.

Now cannot these ideas be easily applied to our own individual cases? A young man, for instance, may be troubled with doubts and questions concerning certain portions of the Christian faith. Some persons make such doubts an excuse for plunging into scenes of riot and dissipation, quenching the light which God has given them and making certain their own spiritual destruction. The case of Cornelius points out the true course which should in such a case be adopted. Men may be troubled with doubts concerning certain doctrines of revelation. But they have no doubt as to the dictates of conscience and the light which natural



religion sheds upon the paths of morals and of life. Let them then use the light they have. Let them diligently practise the will of God as it has been revealed. Let them be earnest in prayer, pure and reverent in life, honest and upright in business, and then in God's own time the doubts will vanish, the darkness will clear away, and the ancient promises will be fulfilled, "Light is sown for the righteous," "The path of the just shineth more and more unto the perfect day," "In the way of righteousness is life, and in the pathway thereof there is no death."

But the example of Cornelius is of still wider application. The position of Cornelius was not a favourable one for the development of the religious life, and yet he rose superior to all its difficulties, and became thus an eminent example to all believers. Men may complain that they have but few spiritual advantages, and that their station in life is thickly strewn with difficulties, hindering the practices and duties of religion. To such persons we would say, compare yourselves with Cornelius and the difficulties external and internal he had to overcome. Servants, for instance, may labour under great apparent disadvantages. Perhaps, if living in an irreligious family, they have few opportunities for prayer, public or private. Men of business are compelled to spend days and nights in the management of their affairs. Persons of commanding intellect or of high station have their own disadvantages, their own peculiar temptations, growing out of their very prosperity. The case of Cornelius shows that each class can rise superior to their peculiar difficulties and grow in the hidden life of the soul, if they but imitate his example as he grew from grace to grace, improving his scanty store till it grew into a



fuller and ampler one, till it expanded into all the glory of Christian privilege, when Cornelius, like Peter, was enabled to rejoice in the knowledge and love of a risen and glorified Redeemer.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I owe a great many of the devout thoughts dealing with the latter portion of this subject to a volume of sermons preached by the celebrated Golden Lecturer, the eloquent Henry Melville, styled *Voices of the Christian Year*. Melville is now as a preacher quite forgotten, and yet he deserves to be gratefully remembered, for he was the first of the old Evangelical school to break through the traditional repetition of common-places which formed the main part of the preaching of the leading popular orators of fifty years ago. From a preacher's point of view his sermons will still repay study. His sermons, for instance, on the less known characters of Scripture, will teach a young divine how to extract edification and instruction out of most unpromising materials, and to apply the essential principles of the Bible to the changed circumstances of modern life. And assuredly this is the real object of a pastor's preaching in a Christian congregation, not the mere repetition of the first elements of Christianity, but an application of its great principles, first proclaimed in the language of the East, to the actions and lives of the men of the West. Preaching of that kind need never be dull and uninteresting,

## CHAPTER VI.

### *THE PETRINE VISION AT JOPPA.*

“Now on the morrow, as they were on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour : and he became hungry, and desired to eat : but while they made ready, he fell into a trance ; and he beholdeth the heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending, as it were a great sheet, let down by four corners upon the earth : wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts and creeping things of the earth and fowls of the heaven. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter ; kill and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord ; for I have never eaten anything that is common and unclean. And a voice came unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, make not thou common.”—ACTS x. 9-15.

THERE are two central figures in the conversion of Cornelius. The one is the centurion himself, the other is St. Peter, the selected and predestined agent in that great work. We have studied Cornelius in the last chapter, and have seen the typical character of all his circumstances. His time, his residence, his training, had all been providential, indicating to us the careful superintendence, the watchful oversight, which God bestows upon the history of individuals as well as of the Church at large. Let us now turn to the other figure, St. Peter, and see if the Lord's providence may not be traced with equal clearness in the circumstances of his case also. We have found Cornelius at Cæsarea, the great Roman port and garrison of Palestine, a very fitting and natural place for a Roman centurion to be

located. We find Peter at this very same time at Joppa, a spot that was consecrated by many a memory and specially associated with a mission to the Gentiles in the times of the Elder Dispensation. Here we trace the hand of the Lord providentially ruling the footsteps of Peter though he knew it not, and leading him, as Philip was led a short time before, to the spot where his intended work lay. The sickness and death of Tabitha or Dorcas led St. Peter to Joppa. The fame of his miracle upon that devout woman led to the conversion of many souls, and this naturally induced Peter to make a longer stay in Joppa at the house of Simon the tanner. How natural and unpremeditated, how very ordinary and unplanned to the natural eye seem the movements of St. Peter ! So they would have seemed to us had we been living at Joppa, and yet now we can see with the light which the sacred narrative throws upon the story that the Lord was guiding St. Peter to the place where his work was cut out when the appointed time should come. Surely the history of Peter and his actions have abundant comfort and sustaining hope for ourselves ! Our lives may be very ordinary and commonplace ; the events may succeed one another in the most matter-of-fact style ; there may seem in them nothing at all worthy the attention of a Divine Ruler ; and yet those ordinary lives are just as much planned and guided by supernatural wisdom as the careers of men concerning whom all the world is talking. Only let us take care to follow St. Peter's example. He yielded himself completely to the Divine guidance, trusted himself entirely to Divine love and wisdom, and then found in such trust not only life and safety, but what is far better, perfect peace and sweetest calm.

There is something very restful in the picture drawn for us of St. Peter at this crisis. There is none of that feverish hurry and restlessness which make some good men and their methods very trying to others. The notices of him have all an air of repose and Christian dignity. "As Peter went throughout all parts, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda"; "Peter put them all forth and prayed"; "Peter abode many days in Joppa"; "Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour." St. Peter, indeed, did not live in an age of telegrams and postcards and express trains, which all contribute more or less to that feverish activity and restlessness so characteristic of this age. But even if he had lived in such a time, I am sure his faith in God would have saved him from that fussiness, that life of perpetual hurry, yet never bringing forth any abiding fruit, which we behold in so many moderns. This results a good deal, I believe, from the development—I was almost going to say the tyranny, the unwitting tyranny of modern journalism, which compels men to live so much in public and reports their every utterance. There are men never tired of running from one committee to another, and never weary of seeing their names in the morning papers. They count that they have been busily and usefully employed if their names are perpetually appearing in newspaper reports as speaking, or at any rate being present at innumerable meetings, leaving themselves no time for that quiet meditation whereby St. Peter gained closest communion with heaven. It is no wonder such men's fussiness should be fruitless, because their natures are poor, shallow, uncultivated, where the seed springs up rapidly but brings forth no fruit to perfection, because it has no

deepness of earth. It is no wonder that St. Peter should have spoken with power at Cæsarea and been successful in opening the door of faith to the Gentiles, because he prepared himself for doing the Divine work by the discipline of meditation and thought and spiritual converse with his Risen Lord. And here we may remark, before we pass from this point, that the conversion of the first Gentile and the full and complete exercise of the power of the keys committed to St. Peter run on lines very parallel to those pertaining to the Day of Pentecost and the conversion of the earliest Jews in one respect at least. The Day of Pentecost was preceded by a period of ten days' waiting and spiritual repose. The conversion of Cornelius and the revelation of God's purposes to St. Peter were preceded by a season of meditation and prayer, when an apostle could find time amid all his pressing cares to seek the housetop for midday prayer and to abide many days in the house of one Simon a tanner. A period of pause, repose, and quietness preceded a new onward movement of development and of action.

I. Now, as in the case of Cornelius, so in the case of St. Peter, we note the *place* where the chief actor in the scene abode. It was at Joppa, and Joppa was associated with many memories for the Jews. It has been from ancient times the port of Jerusalem, and is even now rising into somewhat of its former commercial greatness, specially owing to the late development of the orange trade, for the production of which fruit Jaffa or Joppa has become famous. Three thousand years ago Joppa was a favourite resort of the Phenician fleets, which brought the cedars of Lebanon to King Solomon for the building of the temple (2 Chron. ii. 16). At a later period, when God would send Jonah on a mission to Gentile

Nineveh, and when Jonah desired to thwart God's merciful designs towards the outer world, the prophet fled to Joppa and there took ship in his vain effort to escape from the presence of the Lord. And now again Joppa becomes the refuge of another prophet, who feels the same natural hesitation about admitting the Gentiles to God's mercy, but who, unlike Jonah, yields immediate assent to the heavenly message, and finds peace and blessing in the paths of loving obedience. The very house where St. Peter abode is still pointed out.<sup>1</sup> It is situated in the south-western part of the town, and commands a view over the bay of Joppa and the waters of that Mediterranean Sea which was soon to be the channel of communication whereby the gospel message should be borne to the nations of the distant West. We remark, too, that it was with Simon the tanner of Joppa that St. Peter was staying. When a great change is impending various little circumstances occur all showing the tendencies of

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<sup>1</sup> The house of Simon the tanner is depicted in Lewin's *St. Paul*, vol. i., pp. 87, 88. There is a good description of it, as also of Joppa at large, in Geikie's *The Holy Land and the Bible*, vol. i., p. 18, from which we take the following: "On the south side of the town, at the edge of the sea, close to the lighthouse, one is reminded of the visit of St. Peter to Joppa by the claim of a paltry mosque to occupy the house of Simon the tanner. The present building is comparatively modern, and cannot be the actual structure in which the Apostle lodged. It is, however, regarded by the Mohammedans as sacred, one of the rooms being used as a place of prayer in commemoration, we are told, of the Lord Jesus having once asked God, while here, for a meal; on which a table forthwith came down from heaven. Strange variation of the story of St. Peter's vision! The waves beat against the low wall of the courtyard, so that, like the actual house of Simon, it is close on the sea-shore. Tanning, moreover, in accordance with the unchanging character of the East, is still extensively carried on in this part of the town."

the age. By themselves and taken one by one they do not express much. At the time when they happen men do not regard them or understand their meaning, but afterwards, and reading them in the light of accomplished facts, men behold their significance. Thus it was with Simon Peter and his visit to Simon the tanner of Joppa. Tanners as a class were despised and comparatively outcast among the Jews. Tanning was counted an unclean trade because of the necessary contact with dead bodies which it involved. A tannery must, according to Jewish law, be separated by fifty yards at least from human dwellings. If a man married a woman without informing her of his trade as a tanner, she was granted a divorce. The whole trade of tanners was under a ban, and yet it was to a tanner's house that the Apostle made his way, and there he lodged for many days, showing that the mind even of St. Peter was steadily rising above narrow Jewish prejudices into that higher and nobler atmosphere where he learned in fullest degree that no man and no lawful trade is to be counted common or unclean.

II. We note, again, the *time* when the vision was granted to St. Peter and the mind of the Lord was more fully disclosed to him. Joppa is separated from Cæsarea by a distance of thirty miles. The leading coast towns were then connected by an excellent road, along which horses and vehicles passed with ease. The centurion Cornelius, when he received the angelic direction, forthwith despatched two of his household servants and a devout soldier to summon St. Peter to his presence. They doubtless travelled on horseback, leading spare beasts for the accommodation of the Apostle. Less than twenty-four hours after their departure from



Cæsarea they drew nigh to Joppa, and then it was that God revealed His purposes to His beloved servant. The very hour can be fixed. Cornelius saw the angel at the ninth hour, when, as he himself tells us, "he was keeping the hour of prayer" (x. 30). Peter saw the vision at the sixth hour, when he went up on the house top to pray, according to the example of the Psalmist when he sang, "In the evening and morning and at noon-day will I pray, and that instantly."<sup>1</sup> St. Peter evidently was a careful observer of all the forms amid which his youthful training had been conducted. He did not seek in the name of spiritual religion to discard these old forms. He recognised the danger of any such course. Forms may often tend to formalism on account of the weakness of human nature. But they also help to preserve and guard the spirit of ancient institutions in times of sloth and decay, till the Spirit from on high again breathes upon the dry bones and imparts fresh life. St. Peter used the forms of Jewish externalism, imparting to them some of his own intense earnestness, and the Lord set His seal of approval upon his action by revealing the purposes of His mercy and love to the Gentile world at the noontide hour of prayer. The wisest masters of the spiritual life have ever followed St. Peter's teaching. We may take, for instance, Dr. Goulburn in his valuable treatise on *Personal Religion*. In the sixth chapter of the fourth part of that work he has some wise thoughts on living by rule in the Christian life, where he points out the use of rules and their abuse, strongly urging upon those who desire to grow in grace the formation of rules by which the practices of religion and the soul's inner life may be directed

<sup>1</sup> This is the rendering of Psalm lv. 18 according to the version in the Book of Common Prayer.

and shielded. There is, for instance, no law of Christ which ties men down to morning and evening prayer. Yet does not our own daily experience teach that, if this unwritten rule of the Christian life be relaxed under the pretence of higher spirituality, and men pray only when they feel specially inclined to communion with the unseen, the whole practice of private as well as of public prayer ceases, and the soul lives in an atheistic atmosphere without any recognition or thought of God.<sup>1</sup> This danger has been recognised from the earliest times. Tertullian was a man of narrow views, but of the most intense piety. He was a devout student of the New Testament, and a careful observer of the example of our Lord and His Apostles. The early Christians adopted from the Jews the custom of prayer at the various hours of the day, and turned it into a practical rule of Christian discipline, acknowledging at the same time that there was no Scriptural obligation in the rule, but that it was a mere wise advice for the development of the spiritual life. This was the origin of what is technically called the Canonical Hours, Matins

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<sup>1</sup> A deceased friend of mine, a well-known member of the Society of Friends, once remarked to me about this very point that his Society, to which he belonged to his dying day, while aiming at the highest spirituality, in its neglect of all rules, and suitable therefore for persons of specially exalted tone, had rendered itself unfitted for the training of children. Children cannot be trained without rules, and a society which trusts to educate them in things religious without fixed and definite training must be a hopeless failure. The original principles of "Friends" preclude them from teaching children forms of private prayer, from using fixed Bible reading and regular religious instruction, as well as from stated family worship. Efforts have been made in later times to remedy this effect, but they are merely confessions of the failure of the principles inculcated by George Fox and Robert Barclay and acknowledgments that the Church from which they dissented was right.

with Lauds, Prime, Tierce, Sext, Nones, Evensong, and Compline, which can be traced back in germ to the age next after the Apostles, and were originally grounded upon the example of the Apostles themselves, and specially upon that of St. Peter's practice at Joppa. Let us hear Tertullian on this matter. He wrote a treatise on prayer, in which he presses upon the men of his time the duty of earnestness and intensity in that holy exercise, and when doing so touches upon this very point: "As respecting the time of prayer the observance of certain hours will not be unprofitable—those common hours I mean which mark the intervals of the day—the third, sixth, ninth—which we find in Scripture to have been made more solemn than the rest. The first infusion of the Holy Spirit into the congregated disciples took place at the third hour. Peter saw his vision on the housetop at the sixth hour. Peter and John went into the Temple at the ninth hour when he restored the paralytic to his health." Tertullian then adds the following wise observations, showing that he quite grasped the essential distinction between the slavery of the law and the freedom of the gospel in the matter of external observances: "Albeit these practices stand simply without any Divine precept for their observance; still it may be granted a good thing to establish some definite rule which may both add stringency to the admonition to pray and may as it were by a law tear us out of our ordinary business unto such a duty. So that we pray not less than thrice in the day, debtors as we are to Three—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—besides of course our regular prayers on the entrance of light and of night." The ecclesiastical practice of the Hours may be turned into a mere formal repetition of certain prescribed tasks; but, like all other ordinances which

trace themselves back to primitive Christianity, the Hours are based on a true conception and a noble ideal of the prevailing and abounding place which prayer should occupy in the soul's life, according to the Saviour's own teaching when He spake a parable to His disciples to this end that men ought always to pray and not to faint.<sup>1</sup>

III. We now arrive at the vision which Peter saw upon the housetop. The Apostle, having ascended upon the housetop commanding a view over the blue waters of the Mediterranean lying shimmering and sweltering beneath the rays of the noonday sun, became hungry, as was natural enough, because the usual time of the midday meal was drawing nigh. But there was a deeper reason for the Apostle's felt need of refreshment, and a more immediate providence was watching over his natural powers and their action than ever before had been revealed. The natural hunger was divinely inspired in order that just at that instant when the representatives and delegates of the Gentile world were drawing nigh to his abode he might be prepared to accord them a fitting reception. To the mere man of sense or to the mere carnal mind the hunger of St. Peter may seem a simple natural operation, but to the devout believer in Christianity, who views it as the great and perfect revelation of God to man, who knows that His covenants are in all things well-ordered and sure, and that in His works in grace as well as in His works in nature the Lord leaves nothing to mere chance, but perfectly orders them all down to the minutest detail, to such an one this human hunger of St. Peter's appears as divinely planned in order that a spiritual satisfaction

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<sup>1</sup> Tertullian's treatise on Prayer will be found in Clark's translation of his works, vol. i., pp. 178-204.

and completeness may be imparted to his soul unconsciously craving after a fuller knowledge of the Divine will. St. Peter's hunger is, in fact, but a manifestation in the human sphere of that superhuman foresight which was directing the whole transaction from behind this visible scene; teaching us, in fact, the lesson so often repeated in Holy Scripture that nothing, not even our feelings, our infirmities, our passions, our appetites, are too minute for the Divine love and care, and encouraging us thereby to act more freely upon the apostolic injunction, "In everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known unto God." If St. Peter's hunger were taken up and incorporated with the Divine plan of salvation, we may be sure that our own wants and trials do not escape the omniscient eye of Him who plans all our lives, appointing the end from the very beginning. St. Peter was hungry, and as food was preparing he fell into a trance, and then the vision answering in its form to the hunger which he felt was granted. Vain questions may here be raised, as we noted before in the case of St. Paul, concerning the trance of the Apostle and the communications he held with the unseen world. They are vain questions for us to raise or to attempt to answer, because they belong to an unexplored land full, as many modern experiments show, of strange mysterious facts peculiar to it. This alone we can say, some communication must have been made to St. Peter which he regarded as a Divine revelation. The conversion and reception by St. Peter of the Gentile centurion are facts, the prejudices of St. Peter against such a reception are also undoubted facts. Hitherto he shared the opinion common to all the Twelve that such a reception was contrary to the Divine law and purposes. He must have received upon

the housetop some kind of a heavenly communication which he regarded as equivalent in authority to that ancient rule by which he esteemed the promises and mercy of God limited to the seed of Abraham. But as for any endeavour to understand or explain the mode of God's action on this occasion, it will be just as vain as attempts to pierce the mysteries of God's action in creation, the incarnation, or, to come lower still, in the processes by which life has been communicated to this world and is now sustained and continued thereon. We are in very deed living and moving amid mysteries, and if we refuse to learn or meditate till the mysteries we meet with, the very first step we take, be cleared, we must cease to think and be content to pass life like the beasts that perish. We know not, indeed, the exact manner in which God communicated with St. Peter, or for that matter with any one else to whom He made revelation of His will. We know nothing of the manner in which He spoke to Moses out of the bush, or to Samuel in the night season, or to Isaiah in the Temple. As with these His servants of the Elder Dispensation, so it was with St. Peter on the housetop. We know, however, how St. Luke received his information as to the nature of the vision and all the other facts of the case. St. Luke and St. Peter must have had many an opportunity for conversation in the thrilling, all-important events amid which he had lived. St. Luke too accompanied St. Paul on that journey to Jerusalem described in the twenty-first chapter, and was introduced to the Christian Sanhedrin or Council over which St. James the Just presided. But even if St. Luke had never seen St. Peter, he had abundant opportunities of learning all about the vision. St. Peter proclaimed it to the world from the very time it



happened, and was obliged to proclaim it as his defence against the party zealous for the law of Moses. St. Peter referred to what God had just shown him as soon as he came into the centurion's presence. He described the vision at full length as soon as he came to Jerusalem and met the assembled Church, where its power and meaning were so clearly recognised that the mouths of all St. Peter's adversaries were at once stopped. And again at the Council of Jerusalem held, as described in the fifteenth chapter, St. Peter refers to the circumstances of this whole story as well known to the whole Church in that city. St. Luke then would have no difficulty, writing some twenty years later, in ascertaining the facts of this story, and naturally enough, when writing to a Gentile convert and having in mind the needs and feelings of the Gentiles, he inserted the narrative of the vision as being the foundation-stone on which the growing and enlarging edifice of Gentile Christianity had been originally established. The vision too was admirably suited to serve its purpose. It based itself, as I have said, on Peter's natural feelings and circumstances, just as spiritual things ever base themselves upon and respond to the natural shadows of this lower life, just as the Holy Communion, for instance, bases itself upon the natural craving for food and drink, but rises and soars far away above and beyond the material sphere to the true food of the soul, the Divine banquet wherewith God's secret and loved ones are eternally fed. Peter was hungry, and a sheet was seen let down from heaven containing all kinds of animals, clean and unclean, together with creeping things and fowls of heaven. He was commanded to rise and slay and appease his hunger. He states the objection, quite natural in the mouth of a conscientious



Jew, that nothing common or unclean had ever been eaten by him. Then the heavenly voice uttered words which struck for him the death-knell of the old haughty Jewish exclusiveness, inaugurating the grand spirit of Christian liberalism and of human equality—"What God hath cleansed, make thou not common." The vision was thrice repeated to make the matter sure, and then the heavens were shut up again, and Peter was left to interpret the Divine teaching for himself. Peter, in the light of the circumstances which a few moments later took place, easily read the interpretation of the vision. The distinction between animals and foods was for the Jew but an emblem and type, a mere object lesson of the distinction between the Jews and other nations. The Gentiles ate every kind of animal and creeping thing; the favourite food of the Roman soldiers with whom the Palestinian Jews came most in contact being pork. The differences which the Divine law compelled the Jew to make in the matter of food were simply the type of the difference and separation which God's love and grace had made between His covenant people and those outside that covenant. And just then, to clinch the matter and interpret the vision by the light of divinely ordered facts, the Spirit announced to the Apostle, as "he was much perplexed in himself what the vision might mean," that three men were seeking him, and that he was to go with them doubting nothing, "for I have sent them."<sup>1</sup> The hour had at last come for the mani-

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<sup>1</sup> Calvin, in his commentary on Acts x. 12, has some excellent remarks on the scope and meaning of this vision. "I think that hereby is shown to Peter that the distinction which God hitherto made had now been removed. For as He had made a difference between animals; so by the choice of one nation for Himself, God showed that other nations were common and unclean. Now the distinction between animals being removed, He consequently shows that there is no longer

festation of God's everlasting purposes, when the sacred society should assume its universal privileges and stand forth resplendent in its true character as God's Holy Catholic Church,—of which the Temple had been a temporary symbol and pledge,—a house of prayer for all nations, the joy of the whole earth, the city of the Great King, until the consummation of all things.

IV. The sacred historian next presents St. Peter at Cæsarea. The Apostle rose up obedient to the Divine communication, admitted the men who sought him, lodged them for the night, departed back the next day

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any difference between men, and that the Jew does not differ from the Greek. Hence Peter is warned not to shrink from contact with the Gentiles as if they were unclean. There is no doubt but that God wished to encourage Peter to come boldly to Cornelius. Therefore, in order that he might be perfectly satisfied, God shows him as in a picture that the distinctions made by the law between clean and unclean had been abolished; whence he may conclude that the partition which had hitherto divided Jews from Gentiles was now overthrown. Now Paul teaches that this mystery had been hid from the ages that the Gentiles should be partakers with God's people and grafted into one body. Therefore Peter never would have dared to open the gate of the Kingdom of Heaven, unless God Himself had shown him that the wall had been removed and that entrance was free to all." He then goes on to consider the objection that St. Peter must have known of the call of the Gentiles from the words of Christ's commission to go and make disciples of all nations, and therefore this vision was unnecessary. "I answer that there was so much difficulty in the novelty of the whole state of affairs that the apostles could not at once grasp the position. They knew indeed in theory the prophecies and the precept of Christ about preaching to the Gentiles, but when they came to practice, struck by the awful novelty, they hesitated. Wherefore it is not wonderful that the Lord should confirm St. Peter's mind by a new sign." Calvin clearly recognised that the inspiration enjoyed by St. Peter did not remove his natural slowness of perception. The apostles were like the bulk of ordinary men, very slow to grasp the full meaning of a novel position or principle.

along the same road which they had followed, and arrived at Cæsarea on the fourth day from the original appearance to Cornelius ; so that if the angel had been seen by the centurion on Saturday or the Sabbath the vision would have been seen at Joppa on the Lord's Day, and then on Tuesday St. Peter must have arrived at Cæsarea. St. Peter did not travel alone. He doubtless communicated the vision he had seen to the Church at Joppa at the evening hour of devotion, and determined to associate with himself six prominent members of that body in the fulfilment of his novel enterprise that they might be witnesses of God's actions and assistants to himself in the work of baptism and of teaching. As soon as the missionary party arrived at the house of Cornelius, they found a large party assembled to meet them, as Cornelius had called together his kinsmen and acquaintances to hear the message from heaven. Cornelius received St. Peter with an expression of such profound reverence, prostrating himself on the earth, that St. Peter reproved him : " But Peter raised him up, saying, Stand up : I myself also am a man." Cornelius, with his mind formed in a pagan mould and permeated with pagan associations and ideas, regarded Peter as a superhuman being, and worthy therefore of the reverence usually rendered to the Roman Emperor as the living embodiment of deity upon earth. He fell down and adored St. Peter, even as St. John adored the angel who revealed to him the mysteries of the unseen world (Rev. xxii. 8), till reminded by St. Peter that he was a mere human being like the centurion himself, full of human prejudices and narrow ideas which would have prevented him accepting the invitation of Cornelius if God Himself had not intervened. Cor-

nelius then describes the circumstances of his vision and the angelic directions which he had received, ending by requesting St. Peter to announce the revelation of which he was the guardian. The Apostle then proceeds to deliver an address, of which we have recorded a mere synopsis alone; the original address must have been much longer. St. Peter begins the first sermon delivered to Gentiles by an assertion of the catholic nature of the Church, a truth which he only just now learned: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to Him": a passage which has been much misunderstood. People have thought that St. Peter proclaims by these words that it was no matter what religion a man professed, provided only he led a moral life and worked righteousness. His doctrine is of quite another type. He had already proclaimed to the Jews the exclusive claims of Christ as the door and gate of eternal life. In the fourth chapter and twelfth verse he had told the Council at Jerusalem that "in none other than Jesus Christ of Nazareth is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men wherein we must be saved." St. Peter had seen and heard nothing since which could have changed his views or made him think conscious faith in Jesus Christ utterly unimportant, as this method of interpretation, to which I refer, would teach. St. Peter's meaning is quite clear when we consider the circumstances amid which he stood. He had hitherto thought that the privilege of accepting the salvation offered was limited to the Jews. Now he had learned from Heaven itself that the offer of God's grace and mercy was free to all, and that wherever man was responding to the dictates of

conscience and yielding assent to the guidance of the inner light with which every man was blessed, there God's supreme revelation was to be proclaimed and for them the doors of God's Church were to be opened wide.

St. Peter then proceeds, in his address, to recapitulate the leading facts of the gospel story. He begins with John's baptism, glances at Christ's miracles, His crucifixion, resurrection, and mission of the apostles, concluding by announcing His future return to be the Judge of quick and dead. St. Peter must, of course, have entered into greater details than we possess in our narrative; but it is not always noticed that he was addressing people not quite ignorant of the story which he had to tell. St. Peter begins by expressly stating, "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching good tidings of peace by Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)—that saying ye yourselves know." Cornelius and his friends were devout and eager students of Jewish religious movements, and they had heard in Cæsarea vague reports of the words and doings of the great prophet who had caused such commotion a few years before. But then they were outside the bounds of Israel, whose religious authorities had rejected this prophet. The religion of Israel had illuminated their own pagan darkness, and they therefore looked up to the decision of the high priests and of the Sanhedrin with profound veneration, and dared not to challenge it. They had never previously come in personal contact with any of the new prophet's followers, and if they had, these followers would not have communicated to them anything of their message. They simply knew that a wondrous teacher had appeared, but that his teaching was universally repudiated by the men whose

views they respected, and therefore they remained content with their old convictions. The information, however, which they had gained formed a solid foundation, upon which St. Peter proceeded to raise the superstructure of Christian doctrine, impressing the points which the Jews denied—the resurrection of Christ and His future return to judge the world.

In this connexion St. Peter touches upon a point which has often exercised men's minds. In speaking of the resurrection of Christ he says, "Him God raised up the third day, and gave Him to be made manifest, not to all the people, but unto witnesses that were chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead." From the time of Celsus, who lived in the second century, people have asked, Why did not the risen Saviour manifest Himself to the chief priests and Pharisees? Why did He show Himself merely to His friends? It is evident that from the very beginning this point was emphasised by the Christians themselves, as St. Peter expressly insists upon it on this occasion. Now several answers have been given to this objection. Bishop Butler in his *Analogy* deals with it. He points out that it is only in accordance with the laws of God's dealings in ordinary life. God never gives overwhelming evidence. He merely gives sufficient evidence of the truth or wisdom of any course, and till men improve the evidence which He gives He withholds further evidence. Christ gave the Jews sufficient evidences of the truth of His work and mission in the miracles which He wrought and the gracious words which distilled like Divine dew from His lips. They refused the evidence which He gave, and it would not have been in accordance with the principles of Divine



action that He should then give them more convincing evidence. Then, again, the learned Butler argues that it would have been useless, so far as we are concerned, to have manifested Christ to the Jewish nation at large; unless He was also revealed and demonstrated to be the risen Saviour to the Romans, and not to them merely, but also to each successive generation of men as they arose. For surely if men can argue that the apostles and the five hundred brethren who saw Christ were deceived, or were the subjects of a temporary illusion, it might be as justly argued that the high priests and the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem were in their turn deceived or the subjects of a hallucination which their longing desire for a Messiah had produced. In modern times, again, Dr. Milligan in an able and acute work on the Resurrection has argued that it was impossible, from the nature of the resurrection body and the character of the resurrection state, for Christ to be thus manifested to the Jewish nation. He belonged to a different plane. He lived now on a higher level. He could not now be submitted to a coarse contact with gross carnal men. He was obliged therefore to depend upon the testimony of His chosen witnesses, fortified and confirmed by the evidence of miracles, of prophecy, and of the Holy Ghost speaking in them and working with them. All these arguments are most true and sound, and yet they fail to come home to many minds. They leave something to be desired. They fail in showing the wisdom of the actual course that was adopted. They leave men thinking in their secret hearts, would it not after all have been the best and most satisfactory course if the risen Lord had been manifested to all the people and not merely to witnesses chosen before of God? I think there is an argument



which has not been sufficiently worked out, and which directly meets and answers this objection. The risen Saviour was not manifested to all the people because such a course would have wrecked the great cause which He had at heart, and defeated the great end of His Incarnation, which was to establish a Church on the earth where righteousness and joy and peace in the Holy Ghost would find place and abound. Let us take it in this way. Let us inquire what would have been the immediate consequence had Christ been revealed to all the people gathered in their millions for the celebration of the Passover. They would either have rejected Him afresh or they would have accepted Him. If they rejected Him, they would be only intensifying their responsibility and their guilt. If they accepted Him as their long-expected Messiah, then would have come the catastrophe. In their state of strained expectation and national excitement they would have swept away every barrier, they would have rushed to arms and burst into open rebellion against the Romans, initiating a war which would have only ended with the annihilation of the Jewish race or with the destruction of the Roman Empire. The immediate result of the manifestation of the risen Saviour to the chief priests and the people would have been a destruction of human life of such a widespread and awful character as the world had never seen. This we know from history would have been infallibly the case. Again and again during the first and second centuries the Jews burst forth into similar rebellions, urged on by some fanatic who pretended to be the long-expected deliverer, and tens of thousands, aye, even hundreds of thousands of human lives Jewish and Gentile were repeatedly sacrificed on the altar of this vain carnal expectation.

We are expressly informed too that our Lord had experience in His own person of this very danger. St. John tells us that Christ Himself had on one occasion to escape from the Jews when they were designing to take Him by force and make Him a King ; while again the first chapter of this Book of Acts and the query which the apostles propounded upon the very eve of the Ascension show that even they with all the teaching which they had received from our Lord concerning the purely spiritual and interior nature of His kingdom still shared in the national delusions, and were cherishing dreams of a carnal empire and of human triumphs. We conclude, then, on purely historical grounds, and judging from the experience of the past, that the course which God actually adopted was profoundly wise and eminently calculated to avoid the social dangers which surrounded the path of the Divine developments. I think that if we strive to realise the results which would have followed the manifestation of Christ in the manner which objectors suggest, we shall see that the whole spiritual object, the great end of Christ's Incarnation, would have been thus defeated. That great end was to establish a kingdom of righteousness, peace, and humility ; and that was the purpose attained by the mode of action which was in fact adopted. From the Day of Pentecost onward the Church grew and flourished, developing and putting in practice, however imperfectly, the laws of the Sermon on the Mount. But if Christ had revealed Himself to the unconverted Jews of Jerusalem after the Resurrection, it would not have had the slightest effect towards making them Christians after the model which He desired. Nay, rather such an appearance would merely have

intensified their narrow Judaism and confirmed them in those sectarian prejudices, that rigid exclusiveness from which Christ had come to deliver His people. The spiritual effects of such an appearance would have been absolutely nothing. The temporal effects of it would have been awfully disastrous, unless indeed God had consented to work the most prodigious and astounding miracles, such as smiting the Roman armies with destruction and interfering imperiously with the course of human society.

Then again it is worthy of notice that such a method of dealing with the Jews would have been contrary to Christ's methods and laws of action as displayed during His earthly ministry. He never worked miracles for the mere purposes of intellectual conviction. When a sign from heaven was demanded from Him for this very purpose He refused it. He ever aimed at spiritual conversion. An exhibition of the risen Lord to the Jewish nation might have been followed by a certain amount of intellectual conviction as to His Divine authority and mission. But, apart from the power of the Holy Ghost, which had not been then poured out, this intellectual conviction would have been turned to disastrous purposes, as we have now shown, and have proved utterly useless towards spiritual conversion. The case of the Resurrection is, in fact, in many respects like the case of the Incarnation. We think in our human blindness that we would have managed the manifestations and revelations of God much better, and we secretly find fault with the Divine methods, because Christ did not come much earlier in the world's history and thousands of years had to elapse before the Divine Messenger appeared. But then, Scripture assures us that it was in the fulness

of time Christ came, and a profounder investigation will satisfy us that history and experience bear out the testimony of Scripture. In the same way human blindness imagines that it would have managed the Resurrection far better, and it has a scheme of its own whereby Christ should have been manifested at once to the Jews, who would have been at once converted into Christians of the type of the apostles, and then Christ should have advanced to the city of Rome, casting down the idols in His triumphant march, and changing the Roman Empire into the Kingdom of God. This is something like the scheme which the human mind in secret substitutes for the Divine plan, a scheme which would have involved the most extravagant interruptions of the world's business, the most extraordinary interpositions on God's part with the course of human affairs. For one miracle which the Divine method has necessitated, the human plan, which lies at the basis of the objections we are considering, would have necessitated the working of a thousand miracles and these of a most stupendous type. These considerations will help to show what bad judges we are of the Divine methods of action, and will tend towards spiritual and mental humility by impressing upon us the inextricable confusion into which we should inevitably land the world's affairs had we but the management of them for a very few hours. Verily as we contemplate the Resurrection of Christ and the management of the whole plan of salvation, we gather glimpses of the supernatural wisdom whereby the whole was ordered, and learn thus to sing with a deeper meaning the ancient strain, "Thy way, O God, is in the sea, and Thy paths in the great waters, and Thy footsteps are not known. Thou

leddest thy people like sheep, by the hand of Moses and Aaron."<sup>1</sup>

The sacred narrative then tells us that "while Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." The brethren which came from Joppa, strict observers of the law of Moses as they were, beheld the external proofs of God's presence, and were amazed, "because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost," which is further explained by the words, "they heard the Gentiles speaking with tongues and magnifying God." The gift of the Holy Ghost takes the same and yet a different shape from that in which it was manifested on the Day of Pentecost. The gifts of tongues on the Day of Pentecost was manifested in a variety of languages, because there was a vast variety of tongues and nationalities then present at Jerusalem. But it would seem as if on this occasion the Holy Ghost and His gift of speech displayed itself in sacred song and holy praise: "They heard them speak with tongues and magnify God." Greek was practically the one tongue of all those who were present. The new converts had been inhabitants for years of Cæsarea which was now one of the most thoroughly Greek towns in Palestine, so that the gift of tongues as displayed on this occasion must have been

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<sup>1</sup> The aim of Christianity was to strike at the essential evil of the human heart. One darling sin of man is ostentation. It was one special vice of society in the age of the Incarnation, as students of the history of that period know right well. Now the real objection to the Divine method of action about Christ's Resurrection is that it was not ostentatious. If the human scheme had been adopted, it would simply have encouraged and sanctioned the ostentation which already dominated the world. But the Divine rule ever is this, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation," and in the very method of its development Christianity has taught men humility and self-abasement.

of somewhat different character from that exercised on the Day of Pentecost, when a vast variety of nations heard the company of the disciples and apostles speaking in their own languages. There is another difference too between the original outpouring of the Holy Ghost and this repetition of the gift. The Holy Ghost on the first occasion was poured out upon the preachers of the word to qualify them to preach to the people. The Holy Ghost on the second occasion was poured out upon the persons to whom the word was preached to sanction and confirm the call of the Gentiles. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are confined to no rank or order. They are displayed as the common property of all Christian people, and indicate the freedom and the plenteousness wherewith God's blessings shall be dispensed under the new covenant which was taking the place of the old Levitical Law.

And then comes the last touch which the narrative puts to the whole story: "Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ." What a corrective we here find of those ultra-spiritual views which make shipwreck of faith! We have known intelligent men speak as if the apostles laid no stress upon holy baptism, and valued it not one whit as compared with the interior gift of the Holy Ghost. We have known intelligent members of the Society of Friends who could not see that the apostles taught the necessity for what they call water baptism. For both these classes of objectors these words of St. Peter, this incident in the story of Cornelius have an important lesson. They prove the absolute necessity in the apostolic estimation of the

rite of Holy Baptism as perpetually practised in the Church of God. For surely if ever the washing of water in the name of the Holy Trinity could have been dispensed with, it was in the case of men upon whom God had just poured the supernatural gift of the Holy Ghost; and yet even in their case the divinely appointed sacrament of entrance into the sacred society could not be dispensed with. They were baptized with water in the sacred name, and then, cherishing that sweet sense of duty fulfilled and obedience rendered and spiritual peace and joy possessed which God bestows upon His elect people, they entered into that fuller knowledge and richer grace, that feast of spiritual fat things which St. Peter could impart, as he told them from his own personal knowledge of the life and teaching of Christ Jesus. It is no wonder that the history of this critical event should terminate with these words: "Then prayed they him to tarry certain days,"<sup>1</sup> expressing their keen desire to drink more deeply of the well of life thus lately opened to their fainting souls.

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<sup>1</sup> Tradition tells very little about Cornelius. There is indeed a long article devoted to him by the Bollandists, *Acta Sanctorum*, Feb. t. 1, p. 280, but there is nothing in it. He is commemorated on Feb. 2nd. The Greeks make him bishop of Scepsis, the Latins of Cæsarea. St. Jerome says that in his time the house of Cornelius had been turned into a church. The story of his life as told in the Martyrologies is evidently a mere mediæval concoction. At Scepsis the prefect Demetrius brings him into a temple of Apollo, when at his prayer the idol is smashed to pieces and the magistrate converted. Such stories are, however, the stock-in-trade of the legend-mongers of the Middle Ages.



## CHAPTER VII.

### *THE HARVEST OF THE GENTILES.*

“The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.”—ACTS xi. 26.

THE eleventh chapter of the Acts is clearly divisible into two portions. There is first the narrative of St. Peter's reception at Jerusalem after the conversion of Cornelius, and secondly the story of the origin of the Antiochene Church, the mother and metropolis of Gentile Christendom. They are distinct the one from the other, and yet they are closely connected together, for they both deal with the same great topic, the admission of the Gentiles to full and free communion in the Church of God. Let us then search out the line of thought which runs like a golden thread through this whole chapter, sure that in doing so we shall find light shed upon some modern questions from this divinely written ecclesiastical history.

I. St. Peter tarried a certain time with Cornelius and the other new converts at Cæsarea. There was doubtless much to be taught and much to be set in order. Baptism was in the early Church administered when the converts were yet immature in faith and knowledge. The Church was viewed as a hospital, where the sick and feeble were to be admitted and cured. It was not therefore demanded of candidates for admission that they should be perfectly instructed in

all the articles and mysteries of the Christian faith. There were indeed some points in which they were not instructed at all till they had been "buried with Christ through baptism into death." Then when they had taken their stand upon the Christian platform, and were able to view the matter from the true vantage point, they were admitted into fuller and deeper mysteries. Peter too must have had his work cut out for him at Cæsarea in striving to organise the Church. St. Philip may have here lent his aid, and may have been constituted the resident head of the local Church.<sup>1</sup> After the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch he worked his way up to Cæsarea, preaching in all the towns and villages of that populous district. There he seems to have fixed his residence, as fifteen years or so later we find him permanently located in that city with his "four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy" (Acts xxi. 8, 9). We may be sure that some such Church organisation was immediately started at Cæsarea. We have already traced the work of organisation in Jerusalem. The apostles originally embraced in themselves all ministerial offices, as in turn these offices were originally all summed up in Jesus Christ. The apostles had taken an important step in the establishment of the order of deacons at Jerusalem, retaining in their own hands the supreme power to which appeal and reports could be made. At Damascus it is evident that at the time of St. Paul's conversion there was an organised Church, Ananias being the head and chief of it, with whom communications were officially held; while the notices about Joppa and the six witnesses of his action whom

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<sup>1</sup> The Church tradition reports, however, that Cornelius was first bishop of Cæsarea, but without any solid authority for the statement. See, however, the note in last chapter, p. 141.

St. Peter brought with him to Cæsarea indicate that an assembly or Church organised after the model of the Jerusalem Church existed in that town.

Having concluded his work in Cæsarea St. Peter returned to Jerusalem, and there had to render an account of his action and was placed upon his defence. "When Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them." This simple circumstance throws much light upon the character of earliest Christianity. It was to a large extent a Christian democracy. The apostles exercised the supreme executive power, but the collective Christian assembly claimed the exercise of their private judgment, and, above all, knew not anything of the fancied privilege of St. Peter, as Prince of the Apostles, to lay down on his own authority the laws for the whole Christian Commonwealth. Here was St. Peter exercising his ministry and apostolic power among the earliest Christians. How were his ministry and authority received? Were they treated as if the personal authority and decision of St. Peter settled every question without any further appeal? This will be best seen if we tell a story well known in the annals of ecclesiastical history. The fable of Papal Supremacy began to be asserted about the year 500, when a series of forgeries were circulated concerning the bishops of Rome and their decisions during the ages of persecution. One of these forgeries dealt with a pope named Marcellinus, who presided over the See of Rome during the beginning of the great Diocletian persecution. The story goes on to tell that Marcellinus fell into idolatry in order to save his life. A council of three hundred bishops was summoned at Sinuessa, when the assembled bishops are reported

to have refused to pass sentence on the Pope, the successor of St. Peter, saying that the Holy See may be judged by no man. They therefore called upon the Pope to condemn himself, as he alone was a judge competent to exercise such a function. This story, according to Döllinger, was forged about the year 500, and it clearly exhibits the different view taken of the position of St. Peter in the Church of Jerusalem and of his alleged successors in the Church of Rome five centuries later. In the latter case St. Peter's successor cannot be judged or condemned by any mortal.<sup>1</sup> According to the Acts of the Apostles the members of the stricter party in the Church of Jerusalem had no hesitation in challenging the actions and teaching of St. Peter himself, and it was only when he could prove the immediate and manifest approval of Heaven that they ceased their opposition, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life."

We can in this incident see how the Church was slowly but surely developing itself under the Divine guidance. The incident when the order of deacons was instituted was the primary step. There was then first manifested that combination of authority and freedom united with open discussion which, originating in the Christian Church, has been the source of all modern society, of modern governments, and modern methods of legislation. Now we see the same ideas applied to questions of doctrine and discipline, till we come in a short time to the perfection of this method in the celebrated Council of Jerusalem which framed the charter and traced out the main lines of development

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<sup>1</sup> See the article on Marcellinus (1) in the *Dictionary of Christian Biography*, vol. iii., p. 804, where all the facts are told of this curious story.

upon which the Church of the Gentiles and true gospel freedom were established.

II. The centre of Christian interest now shifts its position and fixes itself in the city of Antioch, where a further step in advance was taken. Our attention is first of all recalled to the results of St. Stephen's death. "They therefore that were scattered abroad upon the tribulation that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phœnicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to none save only to Jews. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus." This is clearly a case of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, and the question has been raised, Was the action of these men of Cyprus and Cyrene quite independent of the action of St. Peter or an immediate result of the same? Did the men of Cyprus and Cyrene preach the gospel to the Gentiles of Antioch of their own motion, or did they wait till tidings of St. Peter's action had reached them, and then, yielding to the generous instincts which had been long beating in the hearts of these Hellenistic Jews, did they proclaim at Antioch the glad tidings of salvation which the Gentiles of that gay and brilliant but very wicked city so much needed? Our answer to these queries is very short and plain. We think that the preaching of the Hellenists of Cyprus to the Gentiles of Antioch must have been the result of St. Peter's action at Cæsarea, else why did they wait till Antioch was reached to open their mouths to the pagan world? Surely if the sight of sin and wickedness and civilised depravity was necessary to stir them up to efforts for the spiritual welfare of the Gentile world, Phœnicia and Cyprus abounded

with scenes quite sufficient to unseal their lips. But the force of national prejudice and of religious exclusiveness was too strong till they came to Antioch, where tidings must have reached them of the vision and action of St. Peter at Cæsarea.

It is easy to see why this information reached the missionaries at Antioch. Cæsarea was the Roman capital of Palestine, and was a seaport. Antioch was the Roman capital of the province of Syria, an immense extent of territory, which included not merely the country which we call Syria, but extended to the Euphrates on the <sup>2. 22. 3. 4.</sup> west and to the desert intervening between Palestine and Egypt on the south. The prefect of the East resided at Antioch, and he was one of the three or four greatest officials under the Roman emperor. Palestine was, in fact, a part of the province of Syria, and its ruler or president was dependent upon the governor of Syria. It is therefore in strictest accordance with the facts of Roman history when St. Luke tells in his Gospel (ii. 2) concerning the taxation of Augustus Cæsar, "This was the first enrolment made when Quirinus was governor of Syria." Antioch being then the seat of the central government of the eastern division of the Roman Empire, and Cæsarea being the headquarters of an important lieutenant of the Syrian proconsul, it is no wonder there should have been very constant intercourse between the two places. The great magazines of arms for the entire east were located at Antioch, and there too the money was coined necessary to pay the troops and to carry on commercial intercourse. It must have been very easy for an official like Cornelius, or even for any simple private soldier or for an ordinary Jew or Christian of Cæsarea,

to communicate with Antioch, and to send word concerning the proceedings of St. Peter and the blessings vouchsafed by God to any devout person who might be there seeking after light and truth.<sup>1</sup> It is quite natural therefore that, while the Christians dispersed into various lands by the persecution at Jerusalem restrained themselves to the Jews alone throughout their previous labours, when the men of Cyprus and Cyrene heard tidings at Antioch of St. Peter and his doings and revelations at Cæsarea, they at last allowed free scope to their longings which long ago had found place in their more liberalised hearts, and testified to the Gentiles of Antioch concerning the gladsome story of the gospel. Here again we behold another instance of the value of culture and travel and enlarged intelligence. The Hellenists of Cyprus and Cyrene were the first to realise and act out the principle which God had taught St. Peter. They saw that God's mercies were not restrained to the particular case of Cornelius. They realised that his was a typical instance, and that his conversion was intended to carry with it and to decide the possibility of Gentile salvation and the formation of a Gentile Church all over the world, and they put the principle in operation at once in one of the places where it was most needed: "When the men of Cyprus and Cyrene were come to Antioch, they spake unto the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus." The method of the Divine development was in the primitive ages very similar to that we often still behold. Some improvement is required, some new principle has to be set in motion. If younger men begin the work, or if

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<sup>1</sup> Cæsarea and Antioch were about two hundred miles distant from each other by sea. A Roman trireme travelling at express speed would easily have accomplished this distance in two or at most three days.



souls notorious for their freer thought or less prejudiced understandings, attempt to introduce the novel principle, the vast mass of stolid conservative opposition and attachment to the past is at once quickened into lively action. But then some Peter or another, some man of known rectitude and worth, and yet of equally well-known narrow views and devoted adherence to the past, takes some hesitating step in advance. He may indeed strive to limit its application to the special case before him, and he may earnestly deprecate any wider application of the principle on which he has acted. But it is all in vain. He has served the Divine purposes. His narrowness and respectability and personal weight have done their work, and have sanctioned the introduction of the principle which then is applied upon a much wider scale by men whose minds have been liberalised and trained to seize a great broad principle and put it into practical operation.

III. "When they came to Antioch, they spake the word to the Greek also." And verily the men of Cyprus and Cyrene chose a fitting spot to open the kingdom of heaven to the Greek world and to found the mother Church of Gentile Christendom, for no city in the whole world was more completely Satan's seat, or more entirely devoted to those works which St. John describes as the lusts of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the vain-glory of life. Let us reflect a little on the history and state of Antioch, and we shall then see the Divine motive in selecting it as the site of the first great Gentile Church, and we shall see too the Divine guidance which led St. Luke in this typical ecclesiastical history to select the Church of Antioch for such frequent notice, exceeding, as it does, all other Churches save Jerusalem in the amount

of attention bestowed upon it in the Acts of the Apostles.<sup>1</sup>

Antioch and Alexandria were towns dating from the same epoch. They came into existence about the year 300 B.C., being the creation of Alexander the Great himself, or of the generals who divided his empire between them. The city of Antioch was originally built by Seleucus Nicator, the founder of the kingdom of Syria, but was subsequently enlarged, so that in St. Paul's time it was divided into four independent districts or towns, each surrounded by its own walls, and all included within one vast wall some fifty feet high, which surmounted mountain tops and was carried at vast expense across valleys and ravines. Antioch was in the first century counted the third city in the world, Rome being first, Alexandria second, and Antioch third. It had marvellous natural advantages. It was blessed with charming mountain scenery. The peaks rising up on all sides could be seen from every part of the city, imparting thus to life in Antioch that sense not merely of beauty and grandeur, but of the nearness of such beauty and grandeur combined with solitude and freedom from the madding crowd which seem so sweet to a man who passes his life amid the noise and hurry of a great city. What a change in the conditions of life in London would be at once brought about could the scenery surrounding Edinburgh or Lucerne be transferred to the world's metropolis, and the toiler in Fleet Street and the Strand be enabled to look amid his daily labours upon cloud-piercing mount-

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<sup>1</sup> The various Lives of St. Paul and Gibbon in his *Decline and Fall* give minute accounts of Antioch, its grandeur and wickedness; K. O. Müller's *Antiquities of Antioch*, Göttingen, 1839 is an exhaustive work on the subject; see also Mommsen's *Provinces*, Book VIII., ch. x.

ains or peaks clad in a robe of virgin white ! Antioch was built upon the southern bank of the river Orontes, along which it extended about five miles. The main street of the city, otherwise called the Street of Herod after the celebrated Herod the Great who built it, was four and a half miles long. This street was unrivalled among the cities of the world, and was furnished with an arcade on both sides extending its whole length, beneath which the inhabitants could walk and transact business at all times free from the heat and from the rain. The water supply of Antioch was its special feature. The great orator Libanius, a native of Antioch, who lived three hundred years later than St. Paul, while the city yet stood in all its grandeur and beauty, thus dwells on this feature of Antioch in a panegyric composed under the Emperor Constantius : " That wherein we beat all other is the water supply of our city ; if in other respects any one may compete with us, all give way so soon as we come to speak of the water, its abundance and its excellence. In the public baths every stream has the proportions of a river, in the private baths several have the like, and the rest not much less. One measures the abundance of running water by the number of the dwelling-houses ; for as many as are the dwelling-houses, so many are also the running waters. Therefore we have no fighting at the public wells as to who shall come first to draw—an evil under which so many considerable towns suffer, when there is a violent crowding round the wells and outcry over broken jars. With us the public fountains flow for ornament, since every one has water within his doors. And this water is so clear that the pail appears empty, and so pleasant that it invites us to drink."<sup>1</sup> Such was

<sup>1</sup> The same orator informs us that the streets of Antioch were lighted

the description of a pagan who saw Antioch even as St. Paul saw it, and testified concerning the natural gifts with which God had endowed it. But, alas! as with individuals, so is it with cities. God may lavish His best blessings, and yet instead of bringing forth the fruits of righteousness His choicest gifts of nature may be turned into fruitful seed plots of lust and sin. Sodom and Gomorrha were planted in a vale that was well watered and fair and fruitful, even as the Garden of the Lord; but the inhabitants thereof were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly; and so it was with Antioch. This city so blessed in situation and in nature's richest and most precious gifts was celebrated for its wicked pre-eminence amid the awful corruption which then overspread the cities of the world. When the Roman satirist Juvenal, writing about this period of which we treat, would fain account for the excessive dissolution of morals which then prevailed at Rome, his explanation of it was that the manners of Antioch had invaded Rome and corrupted its ancient purity:

"Jampridem Syrus in Tiberim defluxit Orontes."<sup>1</sup>

Amid the general wickedness of Antioch there was

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at night with public lamps. In this respect it stood alone among the cities of antiquity: see Libanius, I., 363, and the notes of Valesius on Ammianus Marcellinus, xiv., 1, 9.

<sup>1</sup> Juv., *Sat.*, iii., 62. See Farrar's *St. Paul*, ch. xvi., for a more minute account of the wickedness of Antioch than we can give in this place. He well remarks: "Cities liable to the influx of heterogeneous races are rarely otherwise than immoral and debased. Even Rome in the decadence of its Cæsarism could groan to think of the dregs of its degradation—the quacks and pandars, and musicians and dancing girls—poured into the Tiber by the Syrian Orontes. . . . It seems as though it were a law of human intercourse that, when races are commingled in large masses, the worst qualities of each appear intensified in the general iniquity."

one element of life and hope and purity. The Jews of Antioch formed a large society in that city governed by their own laws and preserving themselves by their peculiar discipline free from the abounding vices of Oriental paganism. It was at Antioch as it was at Alexandria and Damascus. The Jews at Alexandria had their alabarch to whom they owed special allegiance and by whom alone they were ruled; the Jews of Damascus had their ethnarch who exercised peculiar jurisdiction over them; and so too had the Jews of Antioch a peculiar ruler of their own, forming thus an *imperium in imperio* running counter to our Western notions which in many respects demand an iron uniformity very foreign to the Eastern mind, and show themselves eminently deficient in that flexibility and diversity which found an abundant play even among the arrangements of the Roman Empire.<sup>1</sup> This Jewish quarter of Antioch had for centuries been growing and extending itself, and its chief synagogue had been glorified by the reception of some of the choicest temple spoils which the kings of Syria had at first carried captive from Jerusalem and then in a fit of repentance or of prudent policy had bestowed upon the Jewish colony in their capital city.

Such was the city to which the men of Cyprus and Cyrene were now carrying the news of the gospel, intending, doubtless, to tell merely their Jewish fellow-countrymen and religionists of the Messiah whose love and power they had themselves experienced. Here,

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<sup>1</sup> We shall have frequent occasions to notice the numerous varieties of rule, privileges, and local liberties which prevailed under the Roman Empire. The Romans seem to have scrupulously respected ancient rights and customs wherever possible, provided only the supreme sovereignty of Rome was recognised.

however, they were met by the startling information from Cæsarea. They were, however, prepared for it. They were Hellenistic Jews like St. Stephen. They had listened to his burning words, and had followed closely his epoch-making speeches whereby he confounded the Jews and clearly indicated the opening of a new era. But then God's dispensations seemed to have terminated his teaching and put a fatal end to the hopes which he had raised. Men then misread God's dealings with His servants, and interpreted His ways amiss. The death of Stephen seemed perhaps to some minds a visible condemnation of his views, when in reality it was the direct channel by which God would work out a wider propagation of them, as well as the conversion of the agent destined to diffuse them most powerfully. Apparent defeat is not always permanent disaster, whether in things temporal or things spiritual ; nay, rather the temporary check may be the necessary condition of the final and glorious victory. So it was in this case, as the men of Cyprus and Cyrene proved, when the news of St. Peter's revelation and his decisive action arrived and they realised in action the principles of Catholic Christianity for which their loved teacher St. Stephen had died. And their brave action was soon followed by blessed success, by a rich harvest of souls : "The hand of the Lord was with them ; and a great number that believed turned to the Lord." Thus were laid the foundations of the headquarters, the mother Church of Gentile Christianity.

IV. Now we come to another step in the development. Tidings of the action taken at Antioch came to Jerusalem. The news must have travelled much the same road as that by which, as we have indicated, the story of St. Peter's action was carried to Antioch. The inter-

course between Jerusalem and Antioch was frequent enough by land or by sea ; and no synagogue and no Jewish society was more liberal in its gifts towards the support of the supreme council and hierarchy at Jerusalem than the Jewish colony and its synagogues at Damascus. And the old custom of communication with Jerusalem naturally led the Nazarenes of Antioch to send word of their proceedings up to the apostles and supreme council who ruled their parent society in the same city. We see a clear indication that the events at Antioch happened subsequently to those at Cæsarea in the manner in which the news was received at Jerusalem. There seems to have been no strife, no discussion, no controversy. The question had been already raised and decided after St. Peter's return. So the apostles simply select a fitting messenger to go forth with the authority of the apostles and to complete the work which, having been initiated in baptism, merely now demanded that imposition of hands which, as we have seen in the case of the Samaritan converts, was one of the special functions of the apostles and chiefs of the Church at Jerusalem. And in choosing Barnabas the apostles made a wise choice. They did not send one of the original Twelve, because not one of them was fitted for the peculiar work now demanded. They were all narrow, provincial, untravelled, devoid of that wide and generous training which God had given to Barnabas. It may be too that they felt restrained from going beyond the bounds of Canaan before the twelve years had elapsed of which ancient Christian tradition tells as the limit of their stay in Jerusalem fixed by our Lord Himself.<sup>1</sup> He was a Hellenistic Jew, and he could sympathise with the wider feelings and ideas of

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<sup>1</sup> See Eusebius, *Eccles. Hist.*, v., 18.



the Hellenists. He was a man of Cyprus, a friend and perhaps connexion of many, both Jews and Gentiles, among those whose new-born faith and hope were now in question. And above all he was a man of kindly heart and genial temper and loving thought and blessed charity, fitted to soothe jealousies and allay suspicions, and make the long alienated and despised Gentiles feel at home in the Church and family of Jesus Christ. Barnabas was a person peculiarly fitted to prove a mediator and uniting link in a society where divergent elements found a place and asserted themselves. He was not the man to take a new step or to have decided the question of the admission of the Gentiles if it had not been already settled. He must have come therefore fortified by the authority of the apostles, and then, knowing right well what they approved, he was just the man to carry out the details of an arrangement requiring tact and skill and temper ; though he was by no means suited to decide a great question on its own merits or to initiate any great movement. In the Church of God then, as in the Church of God still, there is a place and a work for the strong man of keen logic and vigorous intellect and profound thought. And there is too a place and a work for the man of loving heart and a charity which evermore delights in compromise. "Barnabas, when he was come, and had seen the grace of God, was glad ; and he exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and faith ; and much people was added unto the Lord." Barnabas had another virtue too. He knew his own weakness. He did not imagine like some men that he was specially strong where he was eminently weak. He felt his want of the active vigorous mind of his

friend of boyhood the new convert Saul. He knew where he was living in comparative obscurity and silence ; so after a little experience of the atmosphere of Antioch he departed to Tarsus to seek for him and bring him back where a great work was awaiting his peculiar turn of mind. There is an ancient historian of Antioch who has preserved for us many stories about that city in these apostolic and even in much earlier ages. His name is John Malalas ; he lived about six hundred years after Christ, but had access to many ancient documents and writers that are no longer known to us. He tells us many things about the primitive Church of Antioch. He has his own version of the quarrel between St. Paul and St. Peter which happened in that city ; and he fixes even the very spot where St. Paul first preached, telling us that its name was Singon Street, which stood near the Pantheon. This may seem to us a minuteness of detail too great to be believed. But then we must remember that John Malalas expressly cites ancient chronologers and historians as his authorities, and he himself lived while as yet Antioch retained all the ancient arrangements of streets and divisions. And surely Saul, as he travelled from Tarsus responding at once to the call of Barnabas, must have seen enough to stir his love to Christ and to souls into heartiest exertion. He came doubtless by sea and landed at Seleucia, the port of Antioch, some sixteen miles distant from the city. As he travelled up to Antioch he would get distant glimpses of the groves of Daphne, a park ten miles in circumference, dedicated indeed to the poetic worship of Apollo, but dedicated also to the vilest purposes of wickedness intimately associated with that poetic worship. Poetry, whether ancient or modern, can be very

blessed, ennobling and elevating man's whole nature. But the same poetry, as in ancient paganism and in some modern writers, can become a festering plague-spot, the abounding source to its votaries of moral corruption and spiritual death.<sup>1</sup>

Daphne and its associations would rouse the whole soul, the healthy moral nature of Saul of Tarsus, inherited originally from his ancient Jewish training, and now quickened and deepened by the spiritual revelations made to him in Christ Jesus. It is no wonder then that here we read of St. Paul's first long and continuous period of ministerial work : "It came to pass that even for a whole year they were gathered

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<sup>1</sup> There is a good description of Daphne as St. Paul may have seen it in Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, ch. xxiii. We borrow a few extracts from it to give a more vivid idea of Antioch in St. Paul's day. "At the distance of five miles from Antioch the Macedonian kings of Syria had consecrated to Apollo one of the most elegant places of devotion in the pagan world. A magnificent temple rose in honour of the God of light ; and his colossal figure almost filled the capacious sanctuary which was enriched with gold and gems and adorned by the skill of the Grecian artists. The deity was represented in a bending attitude, with a golden cup in his hand, pouring out a libation on the earth, as if he supplicated the venerable mother to give to his arms the cold and beauteous Daphne ; for the spot was ennobled by fiction, and the fancy of the Syrian poets had transported the amorous tale from the banks of the Perseus to the town of the Orontes." "The temple and village were deeply bosomed in a thick grove of laurels and cypresses, which reached as far as a circumference of ten miles, and proved in the most sultry summers a cool and impenetrable shade. A thousand streams of the purest water, issuing from every hill, preserved the verdure of the earth and the temperature of the air ; the senses were gratified with harmonious sounds and aromatic odours ; and the peaceful grove was consecrated to health and joy, to luxury and love. The soldier and the philosopher wisely avoided the temptations of this sensual paradise, where pleasure, assuming the character of religion, imperceptibly dissolved the firmness of manly virtue." Gibbon's notes abound with ample proof of the statements he makes. To them we may refer the reader curious about the details of ancient paganism.

together with the Church, and taught much people." The results of the new force which Barnabas introduced into the spiritual life of Antioch soon became manifested. "The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch." Saul of Tarsus possessed what Barnabas did not possess. He possessed a powerful, a logical, and a creative intellect. He realised from the beginning what his own principles meant and to what they were leading him. He taught not Judaism or the Law with an addition merely about Jesus of Nazareth. He troubled not himself about circumcision or the old covenant, but he taught from the very beginning Christ Jesus, Christ in His Divine and human nature, Christ in His various offices, Jesus Christ as the one hope for mankind. This was now at Antioch, as before at Damascus, the staple topic of St. Paul's preaching, and therefore the Antiochenes, with their ready wit and proverbial power of giving nicknames, at once designated the new sect not Nazarenes or Galileans as the Jews of Jerusalem called them, but Christians or adherents of Christ.<sup>1</sup> Here, however, I prefer to avail myself of the exposition which one of the great spiritual teachers of the last generation gave us of this expression. The well-known and learned Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Trench, in his *Study of Words* (21st Ed. : Lond. 1890),

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<sup>1</sup> The Antiochenes were always famous for the dangerous power of ridicule and giving nicknames. They quarrelled on this account with the emperors Hadrian, Verus, Marcus, Severus, and Julian. The last mentioned has celebrated these tendencies in his celebrated treatise entitled *Misopogon, or the Beard-hater*. Even in its final overthrow the city preserved this distinction. In the year 540 the Persian king Chosroes Nushirvan took it by storm. When he appeared before the city he was received with a shower of arrows mingled with obscene sarcasms, which so enraged him that he removed the inhabitants when he had taken the town to a new Antioch in the province of Susa.

p. 189, thus draws out the lesson connected with this word and the time of its appearance: “ ‘The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.’ That we have here a notice which we would not willingly have missed all will acknowledge, even as nothing can be otherwise than curious which relates to the infancy of the Church. But there is here much more than a curious notice. Question it a little closer, and how much it will be found to contain, how much which it is waiting to yield up! What light it throws on the whole story of the Apostolic Church to know where and when this name of Christians was first imposed on the faithful; for imposed by adversaries it certainly was, not devised by themselves, however afterwards they may have learned to glory in it as the name of highest dignity and honour. They did not call themselves, but, as is expressly recorded, they ‘were called’ Christians first at Antioch; in agreement with which statement the name occurs nowhere in Scripture, except on the lips of those alien from or opposed to the faith (Acts xxvi. 28; 1 Peter iv. 16). And as it was a name imposed by adversaries, so among these adversaries it was plainly heathens, and not Jews, who were its authors; for Jews would never have called the followers of Jesus of Nazareth ‘Christians,’ or those of Christ, the very point of their opposition to Him being, that He was not the Christ, but a false pretender to the name. Starting then from this point that ‘Christians’ was a title given to the disciples by the heathen, what may we deduce from it further? At Antioch they first obtained this name—at the city, that is, which was the headquarters of the Church’s mission to the heathen, in the same sense as Jerusalem had been the headquarters of the mission to the seed of

Abraham. It was there and among the faithful there that a conviction of the world-wide destination of the gospel arose; there it was first plainly seen as intended for all kindreds of the earth. Hitherto the faithful in Christ had been called by their adversaries, and indeed were often still called 'Galileans' or 'Nazarenes'—both names which indicated the Jewish cradle wherein the Church had been nursed, and that the world saw in the new society no more than a Jewish sect. But it was plain that the Church had now, even in the world's eyes, chipped its Jewish shell. The name Christians or those of Christ, while it told that Christ and the confession of Him was felt even by the heathen to be the sum and centre of this new faith, showed also that they comprehended now, not all which the Church would be, but something of this; saw this much, namely, that it was no mere sect and variety of Judaism, but a Society with a mission and a destiny of its own. Nor will the thoughtful reader fail to observe that the coming up of this name is by closest juxtaposition connected in the sacred narrative, and still more closely in the Greek than in the English, with the arrival at Antioch, and with the preaching there, of that Apostle who was God's appointed instrument for bringing the Church to a full sense that the message which it had was not for some men only, but for all. As so often happens with the rise of new names, the rise of this one marked a new epoch in the Church's life, and that it was entering upon a new stage of development." This is a long extract, but it sets forth in dignified and aptly chosen words, such as Archbishop Trench always used, the important lessons which the thoughtful student of the Acts may gather from



the time and place where the term "Christians" first sprang into existence.

Finally, we notice in connexion with Antioch that the foundation of the great Gentile Church was marked by the same universal impulse which we trace wherever Christ was effectually preached. The faith of the Crucified evermore produced love to the brethren. Agabus, a prophet whom we shall again meet many years after in the course of St. Paul's life, and who then predicted his approaching arrest and captivity at Jerusalem, made his earliest recorded appearance at Antioch, where he announced an impending famine. Agabus exercised the office of a prophet, which implied under the New Dispensation rather the office of preaching than of prediction. Prediction, indeed, whether under the Old or the New Dispensation, formed but a small portion of the prophetic office. The work of the prophet was pre-eminently that of telling forth God's will and enforcing it upon a careless generation. Occasionally indeed, as in the case of Agabus, that telling forth involved prediction or announcement of God's chastisements and visitations; but far oftener the prophet's work was finished when he enforced the great principles of truth and righteousness as the Christian preacher does still. Agabus seems to have been specially gifted in the direction of prediction. He announced a famine as impending over the whole world, which came to pass in the age of Claudius, offering to the Gentile Church of Antioch an opportunity, of which they gladly availed themselves, to repay somewhat of the spiritual obligation which the Gentiles owed to the Jews according to St. Paul's own rule: "If the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, they owe it to them also to



minister unto them in carnal things.”<sup>1</sup> We can trace here the force and power of ancient Jewish customs. We can see how the mould and form and external shape of the Church was gained from the Jew. The Jewish colony of Antioch had been of old famous for the liberality of its gifts to the mother community at Jerusalem. The predominant element in the Church of Antioch was now Gentile, but still the ancient customs prevailed. The Gentile Christian community acted towards the Jerusalem Church as the Jewish community had been used to treat their countrymen: “The disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren that dwelt in Judæa: which also they did, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.”

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<sup>1</sup> This famine is thoroughly historical. It is noticed by several who wrote of this time, as Dion, lx., 11; Suetonius, Claud., 20; Aurelius, Victor: and is confirmed by the testimony of the coins: see Eckhel, vi., 238, 239, 240. Cf. Lewin's *Fasti Sacri*, p. 274, A.D. 42.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### *THE DEFEAT OF PRIDE.*

“Now about that time Herod the king put forth his hands to afflict certain of the Church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. . . . Immediately an angel of the Lord smote Herod, because he gave not God the glory : and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost. But the word of God grew and multiplied.”—ACTS xii. 1-3, 23-24.

THE chapter at which we have now arrived is very important from a chronological point of view, as it brings the sacred narrative into contact with the affairs of the external world concerning which we have independent knowledge. The history of the Christian Church and of the outside world for the first time clearly intersect, and we thus gain a fixed point of time to which we can refer. This chronological character of the twelfth chapter of the Acts arises from its introduction of Herod and the narrative of the second notable persecution which the Church at Jerusalem had to endure. The appearance of a Herod on the scene and the tragedy in which he was the actor demand a certain amount of historical explanation, for, as we have already noted in the case of St. Stephen five or six years previously, Roman procurators and Jewish priests and the Sanhedrin then possessed or at least used the power of the sword in Jerusalem, while a word had not been heard of a Herod exercising capital jurisdiction

in Judæa for more than forty years. Who was this Herod? Whence came he? How does he emerge so suddenly upon the stage? As great confusion exists in the minds of many Bible students about the ramifications of the Herodian family and the various offices and governments they held, we must make a brief digression in order to show who and whence this Herod was concerning whom we are told, "Now about that time Herod the king put forth his hands to afflict certain of the Church."

This Herod Agrippa was a grandson of Herod the Great, and displayed in the solitary notice of him which Holy Scripture has handed down many of the characteristics, cruel, bloodthirsty and yet magnificent, which that celebrated sovereign manifested throughout his life.<sup>1</sup> The story of Herod Agrippa his grandson was a real romance. He made trial of every station in life. He had been at times a captive, at times a conqueror. He had at various periods experience of a prison house and of a throne. He had felt the depths of poverty, and had not known where to borrow money sufficient

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<sup>1</sup> The Herodian family form a notable instance of the modern doctrine of heredity, which yet is only the ancient principle of Divine action announced long ago in the Second Commandment, "Visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation." The moral taints which we behold in Esau, passion, self-indulgence quenching all forethought, ostentation joined with magnificent generosity, displayed themselves in Herod the Great. In him they were joined with absolute power, and they produced their natural results. They made his heart, his life, his home a howling wilderness, and handed down to his descendants a legacy of wickedness which ceased not to bear fruit so long as his name survived. Herod's family cruelties were so celebrated that we are told by a pagan writer, named Macrobius, that when the Emperor Augustus heard of the slaughter of the innocents of Bethlehem, thinking they were Herod's children, he jokingly said, "were better to be Herod's pigs than Herod's children."

to pay his way to Rome. He had tasted of the sweetness of affluence, and had enjoyed the pleasures of magnificent living. He had been a subject and a ruler, a dependant on a tyrant, and the trusted friend and councillor of emperors. His story is worth telling. He was born about ten years before the Christian era, and was the son of Aristobulus, one of the sons of Herod the Great. After the death of Herod, his grandfather, the Herodian family was scattered all over the world. Some obtained official positions; others were obliged to shift for themselves, depending on the fragments of the fortune which the great king had left them. Agrippa lived at Rome till about the year 30 A.D., associating with Drusus, the son of the Emperor Tiberius, by whom he was led into the wildest extravagance. He was banished from Rome about that year, and was obliged to retire to Palestine, contenting himself with the small official post of *Ædile* of Tiberias in Galilee, given him by his uncle Herod Antipas, which he held about the time when our Lord was teaching in that neighbourhood. During the next six years the fortunes of Agrippa were of the most chequered kind. He soon quarrelled with Antipas, and is next found a fugitive at the court of Antioch with the Prefect of the East. He there borrowed from a money-lender the sum of £800 at  $12\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. interest, to enable him to go to Rome and push his interests at the imperial court. He was arrested, however, for a large debt due to the Treasury just when he was embarking, and consigned to prison, whence the very next day he managed to escape, and fled to Alexandria. There he again raised another timely loan, and thus at last succeeded in getting to Rome. Agrippa attached himself to Caligula, the heir of the empire, and after various chances was appointed

by him King of Trachonitis, a dominion which Caligula and subsequently Claudius enlarged by degrees, till in the year 41 he was invested with the kingdom of the whole of Palestine, including Galilee, Samaria, and Judæa, of which Agrippa proceeded to take formal possession about twelve months before the events recorded in the twelfth chapter of Acts.<sup>1</sup>

Herod's career had been marked by various changes, but in one respect he had been consistent. He was ever a thorough Jew, and a vigorous and useful friend to his fellow-countrymen. We have already noticed that his influence had been used with Caligula to induce the Emperor to forgo his mad project of erecting his statue in the Holy of Holies at Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> Herod had, however, one great drawback in the eyes of the priestly faction at Jerusalem. All the descendants of Herod the Great were tainted by their Edomite blood, which they inherited through him. Their kind offices and support were accepted indeed, but only grudgingly. Herod felt this, and it was quite natural therefore for the newly appointed king to strive to gain all the popularity he could with the dominant party at Jerusalem by persecuting the new sect which was giving them so much trouble. No incident could possibly have been more natural, more consistent with the facts of history, as well as with the known dispositions and tendencies of human nature, than that recorded in these words—"Now about that time Herod the king put forth his hands to afflict certain of the Church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword." Herod's act was a very politic one

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<sup>1</sup> See Lewin's *Fasti Sacri*, A.D. 41, p. 271, for the authorities on the subject of Herod's career.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 95 above.

from a worldly point of view. It was a hard dose enough for the Jewish people to swallow, to find a king imposed upon them by an idolatrous Gentile power; but it was some alleviation of their lot that the king was a Jew, and a Jew so devoted to the service of the ruling hierarchy that he was willing to use his secular power to crush the troublesome Nazarene sect whose doctrine threatened for ever to destroy all hopes of a temporal restoration for Israel. Such being the historical setting of the picture presented to us, let us apply ourselves to the spiritual application and lessons of this incident in apostolic history. We have here a martyrdom, a deliverance, and a Divine judgment, which will all repay careful study.

I. A martyrdom is here brought under our notice, and that the first martyrdom among the apostles. Stephen's was the first Christian martyrdom, but that of James was the first apostolic martyrdom. When Herod, following his grandfather's footsteps, would afflict the Church, "he killed James the brother of John with the sword." We must carefully distinguish between two martyrs of the same name who have both found a place in the commemorations of Christian hope and love. May-day is the feast devoted to the memory of St. Philip and St. James, July 25th is the anniversary consecrated to the memorial of St. James the Apostle, whose death is recorded in the passage now under consideration. The latter was the brother of John and son of Zebedee; the former was the brother or cousin according to the flesh of our Lord. St. James the Apostle perished early in the Church's history. St. James the Just flourished for more than thirty years after the Resurrection. He lived indeed to a comparatively advanced period of the

Church's history, as is manifest from a study of the Epistle which he wrote to the Jewish Christians of the Dispersion. He there rebukes shortcomings and faults, respect for the rich and contempt of the poor, oppression and outrage and irreverence, which could never have found place in that first burst of love and devotion to God which the age of our Herodian martyr witnessed, but must have been the outcome of long years of worldly prosperity and ease. James the Just, the stern censor of Christian morals and customs, whose language indeed in its severity has at times caused one-sided and narrow Christians much trouble, must often have looked back with regret and longing to the purer days of charity and devotion when James the brother of John perished by the sword of Herod.

Again, we notice about this martyred apostle that, though there is very little told us concerning his life and actions, he must have been a very remarkable man. He was clearly remarkable for his Christian privileges. He was one of the apostles specially favoured by our Lord. He was admitted by Him into the closest spiritual converse. Thus we find that, with Peter and John, James the Apostle was one of the three selected by our Lord to behold the first manifestation of His power over the realms of the dead when He restored the daughter of Jairus to life; with the same two, Peter and John, he was privileged to behold our Saviour receive the first foretaste of His heavenly glory upon the Mount of Transfiguration; and with them too he was permitted to behold his great Master drink the first draught of the cup of agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. James the Apostle had thus the first necessary qualification for an eminent worker in the Lord's vineyard. He had been admitted into Christ's most



intimate friendship, he knew much of his Lord's will and mind. And the privileges thus conferred upon St. James had not been misused or neglected. He did not hide his talent in the dust of idleness, nor wrap it round with the mantle of sloth. He utilised his advantages. He became a-foremost, if not indeed the foremost worker for his loved Lord in the Church of Jerusalem, as is intimated by the opening words of this passage, which tells us that when Herod wished to harass and vex the Church he selected James the brother of John as his victim; and we may be sure that with the keen instinct of a persecutor Herod selected not the least prominent and useful, but the most devoted and energetic champion of Christ to satisfy his cruel purpose. And yet, though James was thus privileged and thus faithful and thus honoured by God, his active career is shrouded thick round with elouds and darkness. We know nothing of the good works and brave deeds and powerful sermons he devoted to his Master's cause. We are told simply of the death by which he glorified God. All else is hidden with God till that day when the secret thoughts and deeds of every man shall be revealed. This incident in early Apostolic Church history is a very typical one, and teaches many a lesson very necessary for these times and for all times. If an apostle so privileged and so faithful was content to do his work, and then to pass away without a single line of memorial, a single word to keep his name or his labours fresh among men, how much more may we, petty, faithless, trifling as we are, be contented to do our duty, and to pass away without any public recognition! And yet how we all do crave after such recognition! How intensely we long for human praise and approval! How useless we esteem our labours

unless they are followed by it! How inclined we are to make the fallible judgment of man the standard by which we measure our actions, instead of having the mind's eye ever steadily fixed as James the brother of John had on His approval alone who, now seeing our secret trials, struggles, efforts, will one day reward His faithful followers openly! This is one great lesson which this typical passage by its silence as well as by its speech clearly teaches the Church of every age.<sup>1</sup>

Again, this martyrdom of St. James proclaims yet another lesson. God hereby warns the Church against the idolatry of human agents, against vain trust in human support. Let us consider the circumstances of the Church at that time. The Church had just passed through a season of violent persecution, and had lost one of its bravest and foremost soldiers in the person of Stephen, the martyred deacon. And now there was impending over the Church what is often more trying far than a time short and sharp of violence and blood, —a period of temporal distress and suffering, trying the principles and testing the endurance of the weaker brethren in a thousand petty trifles. It was a time when the courage, the wisdom, the experience of the tried and trusted leaders would be specially required to guide the Church amid the many new problems

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<sup>1</sup> The tradition of the second century has only one story to tell about this martyrdom. We find it in Eusebius, *H. E.*, ii., 9, where we read: "Concerning this James Clement hands down a story worthy of remembrance in the seventh book of his Hypotyposes (or Outlines) delivering it from the traditions of his predecessors, that the messenger who led him to the judgment-seat, beholding his witness, was moved to confess himself a Christian. Both were therefore led away, says he, and on the road (to execution) he asked forgiveness from James. And he, having considered for a little, said, Peace be to thee, and he kissed him tenderly. And thus both were beheaded together."

which day by day were cropping up. And yet it was just then, at such a crisis, that the Lord permits the bloody sword of Herod to be stretched forth, and removes one of the very chiefest champions of the Christian host just when his presence seemed most necessary. It must have appeared a dark and trying dispensation to the Church of that day ; but though attended doubtless with some present drawbacks and apparent disadvantages, it was well and wisely done to warn the Church of every age against mere human dependence, mere temporal refuges ; teaching by a typical example that it is not by human might or earthly wisdom, not by the eloquence of man or the devices of earth that Christ's Church and people must be saved ; that it is by His own right hand, and by His own holy arm alone our God will get Himself the victory.

Yet again we may learn from this incident another lesson rich laden with comfort and instruction. This martyrdom of St. James throws us back upon a circumstance which occurred during our Lord's last journey to Jerusalem before His crucifixion, and interprets it for us. Let us recall it. Our Lord was going up to Jerusalem, and His disciples were following Him with wondering awe. The shadow of the Cross projecting itself forward made itself unconsciously felt throughout the little company, and men were astonished, though they knew not why. They simply felt, as men do on a close sultry summer's day when a thunderstorm is overhead, that something awful was impending. They had, however, a vague feeling that the kingdom of God would shortly appear, and so the mother of Zebedee's children, with all that boldness which affection lends to feminine minds, drew near and strove to secure a boon before all others for her own children. She prayed

that to her two sons might be granted the posts of honour in the temporal kingdom she thought of as now drawing so very near. The Lord replied to her request in very deep and far-reaching language, the meaning of which she then understood not, but learned afterwards through the discipline of pain and sorrow and death: "Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" And then, when James and John had professed their ability, he predicts their future fate: "My cup indeed ye shall drink." The mother and the sons alike spoke bold words, and offered a sincere but an ignorant prayer. Little indeed did the mother dream as she presented her petition—"Command that these my two sons may sit, one on Thy right hand, and one on Thy left hand in Thy kingdom"—how that prayer would be answered, and yet answered it was. To the one son, James, was granted the one post of honour. He was made to sit on the Master's right hand, for he was the first of the apostles called to enter into Paradise through a baptism of blood. While to the other son, St. John, was granted the other post of honour, for he was left the longest upon earth to guide, direct, and sustain the Church by his inspired wisdom, large experience, and apostolic authority.<sup>1</sup> The contrast between the prayer offered up to Christ in ignorance and shortsightedness and the

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<sup>1</sup> Bishop Lightfoot, in his celebrated essay on the Christian Ministry, *Philippians*, pp. 200—205, 2nd edition, regards Episcopacy as the work of St. John. "By whom was the new constitution organised? To this question only one answer can be given. This great work must be ascribed to the surviving apostles. St. John especially, who built up the speculative theology of the Church, was mainly instrumental in completing its external constitution also, for Asia Minor was the centre from which the new movement spread." These words occur in his analysis of Rothe's views, with which Dr. Lightfoot substantially agrees.

manner in which the same prayer was answered in richest abundance suggests to us the comforting reflection that no prayer offered up in sincerity and truth is ever really left unanswered. We may indeed never *see* how the prayer is answered. The mother of St. James may little have dreamt as she beheld her son's lifeless body brought home to her that this trying dispensation was a real answer to her ambitious petition. But we can now see that it was so, and can thus learn a lesson of genuine confidence, of holy boldness, of strong faith in the power of sincere and loving communion with God. Let us only take care to cultivate the same spirit of genuine humility and profound submission which possessed the souls of those primitive Christians enabling them to say, no matter how their petitions were answered, whether in joy or sorrow, in smiles or tears, in riches or poverty, "Not my will, but thine, O Lord, be done."

II. We have again in this twelfth chapter the record of a Divine deliverance. Herod, seeing that the Jewish authorities were pleased because they had now a sympathetic ruler who understood their religious troubles and was resolved to help in quelling them, determined to proceed farther in the work of repression. He arrested another prominent leader, St. Peter, and cast him into prison. The details are given to us of Herod's action and Peter's arrest. Peter was now making his first acquaintance with Roman methods of punishment. He had been indeed previously arrested and imprisoned, but his arrest had been carried out by the Jewish authorities, and he had been consigned to the care of the Temple police, and had occupied the Temple prison. But Herod, though a strict Jew in religion, had been thoroughly Romanised in matters of rule and government, and therefore he treated St.

Peter after the Roman fashion: "When he had taken him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quarternions of soldiers to guard him; intending after the Passover to bring him forth to the people." He was delivered to sixteen men, who divided the night into four watches, four men watching at a time, after the Roman method of discipline.<sup>1</sup> And then, in contrast to all this preparation, we are told how the Church betook herself to her sure refuge and strong tower of defence: "Peter therefore was kept in prison; but prayer was made earnestly of the Church unto God for him." These early Christians had not had their faith limited or weakened by discussions whether petition for temporal blessings were a proper subject of prayer, or whether spiritual blessings did not alone supply true matter for supplication before the Divine throne. They were in the first fervour of Christian love, and they did not theorise, define, or debate about prayer and its efficacy. They only knew that their Master had told them to pray, and had promised to answer sincere prayer, as He alone knew how; and so they gathered themselves in instant ceaseless prayer at the foot of the throne of grace. I say "ceaseless" prayer because it seems that the Jerusalem Church, feeling its danger, organised a continuous service of prayer. "Prayer was made earnestly of the Church unto God for him" is the statement of the fifth verse, and then when St. Peter was released "he came to the house of Mary, where many were gathered together and were praying," though the night must have been far advanced. The crisis was a terrible one; the foremost

<sup>1</sup> These elaborate precautions were doubtless taken on account of his escape on the previous occasion, when the Sanhedrin had arrested him, as narrated in the nineteenth verse of the fifth chapter.

champion, St. James, had been taken, and now another great leader was threatened, and therefore the Church flung herself at the feet of the Master seeking deliverance, and was not disappointed, as the Church has never since been disappointed when she has cast herself in lowliness and profound submission before the same holy sanctuary.<sup>1</sup> The narrative then proceeds to give us the particulars of St. Peter's deliverance, as St. Peter himself seems to have told it to St. Luke, for we have details given us which could only have come either directly or indirectly from the person most immediately concerned. But of these we shall treat in a little. The story now introduces the supernatural, and for the believer this is quite in keeping with the facts of the case. A great crisis in the history of the Jerusalem Church has arrived. The mother Church of all Christendom, the fountain and source of original Christianity, is threatened with extinction. The life of the greatest existing leader of that Church is at stake, and that before his work is done. The very existence of the Christian revelation seems imperilled, and God sends forth an angel, a heavenly messenger, to rescue His endangered servant, and to prove to unbelieving Jew, to the haughty Herod, and to the frightened but praying disciples alike the care which He ever exercises over His Church and people. Here,

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<sup>1</sup> In the fifth century an order of monks was established at Constantinople who practised this ceaseless worship. They were called *Acoimetæ*, or the Watchers. They are described at length in Bingham's *Antiquities*, Book VII., ch. ii., sect. 10, and in Smith's *Dict. Christ. Antiqq.*, vol. i., p. 13. A similar attempt was made in the reigns of James I. and Charles I. by the well-known Nicholas Ferrar in a monastic institution which he planned in connection with the Church of England : see the article in the *Dictionary of National Biography* upon his name.



however, a question may be raised. How was it that an angel, a supernatural messenger, was despatched to the special rescue of St. Peter? Why was not the same assistance vouchsafed to St. James who had just been put to death? Why was not the same assistance vouchsafed to St. Peter himself when he was martyred at Rome, or to St. Paul when he lay in the dungeon in the same city of Rome or at Cæsarea? Simply, we reply, because God's hour was not yet come and the Apostle's work was not yet done. St. James's work was done, and therefore the Lord did not immediately interfere, or rather He summoned His servant to His assigned post of honour by the ministry of Herod. The wrath of man became the instrument whereby the praises of God were chanted and the soul of the righteous conveyed to its appointed place. The Lord did not interfere when St. Paul was cast into the prison house at Cæsarea, or St. Peter incarcerated in the Roman dungeon, because they had then a great work to do in showing how His servants can suffer as well as work. But now St. Peter had many a long year of active labour before him and much work to do as the Apostle of the Circumcision in preventing that schism with which the diverse parties and opposing ideas of Jew and Gentile threatened the infant Church, in smoothing over and reconciling the manifold oppositions, jealousies, difficulties, misunderstandings, which ever attend such a season of transition and transformation as now was fast dawning upon the Divine society. The arrest of St. Peter and his threatened death was a great crisis in the history of the primitive Church. St. Peter's life was very precious to the existence of that Church, it was very precious for the welfare of mankind at large, and so it was a fitting time for God

to raise up a banner against triumphant pride and worldly force by the hand of a supernatural messenger.

The steps by which St. Peter was delivered are all of them full of edification and comfort. Let us mark them. "When Herod was about to bring him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains : and guards before the door kept the prison." It was on that fateful night the same as when the angels descended on the Resurrection morning : the guards were in their rightful place and discharging their accustomed duties, but when God intervenes then human precautions are all useless. The words of the narrative are striking in their quiet dignity. There is no working up of details. There is no pandering to mere human curiosity. Everything is in keeping with the sustained force, sublimity, elevation which we ever behold in the Divine action. Peter was sleeping between two soldiers ; one chained to each arm, so that he could not move without awaking them. He was sleeping profoundly and calmly, because he felt himself in the hands of an Almighty Father who will order everything for the best. The interior rest amid the greatest trials which an assured confidence like that enjoyed by St. Peter can confer is something marvellous, and has not been confined to apostolic times. Our Lord's servants have in every age proved the same wondrous power. I know of course that criminals are often said to enjoy a profound sleep the night before their execution. But then habitual criminals and hardened murderers have their spiritual natures so completely overmastered and dominated by their lower material powers that they realise nothing beyond the present. They are little better than the beasts which perish, and think as little of the future

as they do. But persons with highly strung nervous powers, who realise the awful change impending over them, cannot be as they, specially if they have no such sure hope as that which sustained St. Peter. He slept calmly here as Paul and Silas rejoiced in the Philippian prison house, as the Master Himself slept calmly in the stern of the wave-rocked boat on the Galilean lake, because he knew himself to be reposing in the arms of Everlasting Love, and this knowledge bestowed upon him a sweet and calm repose at the moment of supreme danger of which the fevered children of time know nothing.

And now all the circumstances of the celestial visit are found to be most suitable and becoming. The angel stood by Peter. A light shined in the cell, because light is the very element in which these heavenly beings spend their existence. The chains which bind St. Peter fell off without any effort human or angelic, just as in a few moments the great gate of the prison opened of its own accord, because all these things, bonds and bolts and bars, derive all their coercive power from the will of God, and when that will changes or is withdrawn they cease to be operative, or become the instruments of the very opposite purpose, assisting and not hindering His servants. Then the angel's actions and directions are characteristic in their dignified vigour. He told the awakened sleeper to act promptly: "He smote him on the side, and awoke him, saying, Rise up quickly." But there is no undue haste. As on the Resurrection morning the napkin that was upon Christ's head was found not lying with the rest of the grave-cloths, but rolled up in a place by itself, so too on this occasion the angel shows minute care for Peter's personal appearance. There must be nothing undigni-

fied, careless, untidy even, about the dress of the rescued apostle: "Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals." St. Peter had naturally laid aside his external garments, had unloosed his inner robes, and taken off his sandals when preparing for sleep. Nothing, however, escapes the heavenly messenger, and so he says, "Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me," referring to the loose upper robe or overcoat which the Jews wore over their underclothes; and then the angel led him forth, teaching the Church the perpetual lesson that external dignity of appearance is evermore becoming to God's people, when not even an angel considered these things beneath his notice amid all the excitement of a midnight rescue, nor did the inspired writer omit to record such apparently petty details. Nothing about St. Peter was too trivial for the angel's notice and direction, as again nothing in life is too trivial for the sanctifying and elevating care of our holy religion. Dress, food, education, marriage, amusements, all of life's work and of life's interests, are the subject-matter whereon the principles inculcated by Jesus Christ and taught by the ministry of His Church are to find their due scope and exercise.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The early Church has left us a treatise showing how thoroughly it recognised its duty in this respect. The "Pædagogus" or the "Instructor" of Clement of Alexandria is a handbook of the social life of the early Christians, teaching them what to do and wear and say under every conceivable circumstance. Clement thinks nothing too trivial for the rule of Christian principle, prescribing the kind of clothes, shoes, and beds which should be used. He may seem at times to border on the ludicrous in his minuteness; but then we cannot realise how profoundly paganism had corrupted human life and manners. Thus in Book III., ch. xi., he treats of the management of the hair by men. Paganism had introduced many sensual practices in this direction. Clement lays down: "Let the head of men be shaven, unless it has curly hair. But let the chin have the hair. But let not twisted locks hang far down

Peter's deliverance was now complete. The angel conducted him through one street to assure him that he was really free and secure him from bewilderment, and then departed. The Apostle thereupon sought out the well-known centre of Christian worship, "the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark," where stood the upper chamber, honoured as no other upper chamber had ever been. There he made known his escape, and then retired to some secret place where Herod could not find him, remaining there concealed till Herod was dead and direct Roman law and authority were once more in operation at Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup> There are two or three details in this narrative that are deserving of special notice, as showing that St. Luke received the story most probably from St. Peter himself. These touches are expressions of St. Peter's inner thoughts, which could have been known only to St. Peter, and must have been derived from him. Thus we are told about his state of mind when the angel appeared: "He wist not that it was true which was done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision." Again, after his deliverance, we are told of the thoughts

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from the head gliding into womanish ringlets. . . . Since cropping is to be adopted, not on account of elegance, but for the necessity of the case; the hair of the head, that it may not grow so long as to come down and interfere with the eyes, and that of the moustache similarly which is dirtied in eating, is to be cut round, not by a razor, for that were unbecoming, but by a pair of cropping scissors. But the hair on the chin is not to be disturbed, as it gives no trouble, and lends to the face dignity and paternal terror." This treatise of a very early Christian writer can be easily consulted in Clark's *Ante-Nicene Library*.

<sup>1</sup> There is an ancient tradition that our Lord bade the apostles remain twelve years in Jerusalem before they dispersed to preach the gospel all the world over (Eusebius, *H. E.*, V., xviii.). Some think that the famine and persecution which now happened may have been the occasion of their dispersion.

which passed through his mind, the words which rose to his lips when he found himself once again a free man: "When Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a truth that the Lord hath sent forth His angel, and delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.' While, again, how true to life and to the female nature is the incident of the damsel Rhoda! She came across the courtyard to hearken and see who was knocking at the outer gate at that late hour: "When she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for joy, but ran in and told that Peter stood before the gate." We behold the impulsiveness of the maid. She quite forgot the Apostle's knocking at the gate in her eager desire to convey the news to his friends. And, again, how true to nature their scepticism! They were gathered praying for Peter's release, but so little did they expect an answer to their prayers that, when the answer does come, and in the precise way that they were asking for it and longing for it, they are astonished, and tell the maid-servant who bore the tidings, "Thou art mad." We pray as the primitive Church did, and that constantly; but is it not with us as with them? We pray indeed, but we do not expect our prayers to be answered, and therefore we do not profit by them as we might.

Such were the circumstances of St. Peter's deliverance, which was a critical one for the Church. It struck a blow at Herod's new policy of persecution unto death; it may have induced him to depart from Jerusalem and descend to Cæsarea, where he met his end, leaving the Church at Jerusalem in peace; and the deliverance must have thrown a certain marvellous halo round St. Peter when he appeared again at



Jerusalem, enabling him to occupy a more prominent position without any fear for his life.

III. We have also recorded in this chapter a notable defeat of pride, ostentation, and earthly power. The circumstances are well known. Herod, vexed perhaps by his disappointment in the matter of Peter, went down to Cæsarea, which his grandfather had magnificently adorned. But he had other reasons too. He had a quarrel with the men of Tyre and Sidon, and he would take effective measures against them. Tyre and Sidon were great seaports and commercial towns, but their country did not produce food sufficient for the maintenance of its inhabitants, just as England, the emporium of the world's commerce, is obliged to depend for its food supplies upon other and distant lands.<sup>1</sup> The men of Tyre and Sidon were not, however, unacquainted with the ways of Eastern courts. They bribed the king's chamberlain, and Herod was appeased. There was another motive which led Herod to Cæsarea. It was connected with his Roman experience and with his courtier-life. The Emperor Claudius Cæsar was his friend and patron. To him Herod owed his restoration to the rich dominions of his grandfather. That emperor had gone in the previous year, A.D. 43, to conquer Britain. He spent six months in our northern regions in Gaul and Britain, and then, when smitten by the cold blasts of midwinter, he fled to the south again, as so many of

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<sup>1</sup> It is noteworthy, indeed, that it was with Tyre and Sidon in the days of Herod as it was with them in the earlier days of King Solomon and of the prophets. In 1 Kings v. 10, 11 we see that Hiram, king of Tyre, depended on Solomon for food: "So Hiram gave Solomon timber of cedar and timber of fir according to all his desire. And Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand measures of wheat for food to his household, and twenty measures of pure oil: thus gave Solomon to Hiram year by year"; with which may be compared Ezekiel xxvii. 17.



our own people do now. He arrived in Rome in the January of the year 44, and immediately ordered public games to be celebrated in honour of his safe return, assuming as a special name the title *Britannicus*. These public shows were imitated everywhere throughout the empire as soon as the news of the Roman celebrations arrived. The tidings would take two or three months to arrive at Palestine, and the Passover may have passed before Herod heard of his patron's doings. Jewish scruples would not allow him to celebrate games after the Roman fashion at Jerusalem, and for this purpose therefore he descended to the Romanised city of *Cæsarea*, where all the appliances necessary for that purpose were kept in readiness. There is thus a link which binds together the history of our own nation and this interesting incident in early Christian history. The games were duly celebrated, but they were destined to be Herod's last act. On an appointed day he sat in the theatre of *Cæsarea* to receive the ambassadors from Tyre and Sidon. He presented himself early in the morning to the sight of the multitude clad in a robe of silver which flashed in the light reflecting back the rays of the early sun and dazzling the mixed multitude—supple, crafty Syrians, paganised Samaritans, self-seeking and worldly-wise Phœnicians. He made a speech in response to the address of the envoys, and then the flattering shout arose, "The voice of a god, and not of a man." Whereupon the messenger of God smote Herod with that terrible form of disease which accompanies unbounded self-indulgence and luxury, and the proud tyrant learned what a plaything of time, what a mere creature of a day is a king as much as a beggar, as shown by the narrative preserved by Josephus of this event. He tells us

that, when seized by the mortal disease, Herod looked upon his friends, and said, "I, whom you call a god, am commanded presently to depart this life; while Providence thus reproves the lying words you just now said to me; and I, who was by you called immortal, am immediately to be hurried away by death."<sup>1</sup> What

<sup>1</sup> The story of the death of Herod Agrippa as told by Josephus, *Antiqq.*, Book XIX., ch. viii., is in striking unison with that given in the Acts. "Now when Agrippa had reigned three years over all Judea, he came to the city Cæsarea, formerly called Strato's Tower; and there he exhibited shows in honour of Cæsar, upon his being informed that there was a certain festival celebrated on account of his safety. At which festival a great multitude was gotten together of the principal persons, and such as were of dignity through his province. On the second day of which shows he put on a garment made wholly of silver, and of a contexture truly wonderful, and came into the theatre early in the morning; at which time the silver of his garment, being illuminated by the fresh reflexion of the sun's rays upon it, shone out after a surprising manner, and was so resplendent as to spread a terror over those that looked intently upon him; and presently his flatterers cried out, one from one place, and another from another (though not for his good), that he was a god; and they added, 'Be thou merciful to us; for though we have hitherto revered thee only as a man, yet shall we henceforth own thee as superior to mortal nature.' Upon this the king did neither rebuke them, nor reject their impious flattery. But as he presently afterwards looked up he saw an owl sitting on a certain rope over his head, and immediately understood that this bird was the messenger of ill tidings, as it had once been the messenger of good tidings to him, and fell into the deepest sorrow. A severe pain also arose in his stomach, and began in a most violent manner. He therefore looked upon his friends, and said, 'I, whom you call a god, am commanded presently to depart this life; while Providence thus reproves the lying words you just now said to me; and I, who was by you called immortal, am immediately to be hurried away by death. But I am bound to accept of what Providence allots, as it pleases God; for we have by no means lived ill, but in a splendid and happy manner.' When he said this his pain became violent, and he was carried into the palace." The reference to the owl relates to a story about Agrippa's earlier life told by Josephus in his *Antiqq.*, Book XVIII., ch. vi. The Emperor Tiberius had bound Agrippa, and placed him in his purple garments opposite his palace, with a number of other prisoners, among whom was a German. An

a striking picture of life's changes and chances, and of the poetic retributions we at times behold in the course of God's Providence ! One short chapter of the Acts shows us Herod triumphant side by side with Herod laid low, Herod smiting apostles with the sword side by side with Herod himself smitten to death by the Divine sword. A month's time may have covered all the incidents narrated in this chapter. But, short as the period was, it must have been rich in support and consolation to the apostles Saul and Barnabas, who were doubtless deeply interested spectators of the rapidly shifting scene, telling them clearly of the heavenly watch exercised over the Church. They had come up from Antioch, bringing alms to render aid to their afflicted brethren in Christ. The famine, as we have just now seen from the anxiety of the men of Tyre and Sidon to be on friendly terms with Herod, was rapidly making itself felt throughout Palestine and the adjacent lands, and so the deputies of the Antiochene Church hurried up to Jerusalem with the much-needed gifts.<sup>1</sup> It may indeed be said, how could St. Paul hope to escape at such a time ? Would it not have been madness for him to risk his safety in a city where he had once been so well known ? But, then, we must remember that it was at the Passover

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owl perched on a tree near Agrippa, whereupon the German predicted that he would be freed from his bonds, and be raised to highest station ; but that when he saw the owl again his death would be only five days distant.

<sup>1</sup> The Jews themselves received at the same time the support of their foreign proselytes. Helena, Queen of Adiabene, sent liberal gifts to Jerusalem to support the famine-stricken multitudes of that city, as Josephus tells in his *Antiquities*, XX., ii., 5. Cf. Lewin's *Life of St. Paul*, vol. i., p. 108, where the reader will find engravings of her mausoleum as it is still to be seen at Jerusalem,

season Saul and Barnabas went from Antioch to Jerusalem. Vast crowds then entered the Holy City, and a solitary Jew or two from Antioch might easily escape notice among the myriads which then assembled from all quarters. St. Paul enjoyed too a wondrous measure of the Spirit's guidance, and that Spirit told him that he had yet much work to do for God. The Apostle had wondrous prudence joined with wondrous courage, and we may be sure that he took wisest precautions to escape the sword of Herod which would have so eagerly drunk his blood. He remained in Jerusalem all the time of the Passover. His clear vision of the spiritual world must then have been most precious and most sustaining. All the apostles were doubtless scattered; James was dead, and Peter doomed to death. The temporal troubles, famine and poverty, which called Saul and Barnabas to Jerusalem, brought with them corresponding spiritual blessings, as we still so often find, and the brave words of the chosen vessel, the *Vas Electionis*, aided by the sweet gifts of the Son of Consolation, may have been very precious and very helpful to those deepest souls in the Jerusalem Church who gathered themselves for continuous prayer in the house of Mary the mother of John, teaching them the true character, the profound views, the genuine religion of one whose earlier life had been so very different and whose later views may have been somewhat suspected. Saul and Barnabas arrived in Jerusalem at a terrible crisis, they saw the crisis safely passed, and then they returned to an atmosphere freer and broader than that of Jerusalem, and there in the exercise of a devoted ministry awaited the further manifestation of the Divine purposes.

## CHAPTER IX.

### *ST. PAUL'S ORDINATION AND FIRST MISSIONARY TOUR.*

“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, went down to Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. . . . But they, passing through from Perga, came to Antioch of Pisidia; and they went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down.”—ACTS xiii. 2-4, 14.

“And it came to pass in Iconium, that they entered together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of Jews and of Greeks believed. . . . They sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been committed to the grace of God for the work which they had fulfilled.”—ACTS xiv. 1, 26.

WE have now arrived at what we might call the watershed of the Acts of the Apostles. Hitherto we have had very various scenes, characters, personages to consider. Henceforth St. Paul, his labours, his disputes, his speeches, occupy the entire field, and every other name that is introduced into the narrative plays a very subordinate part. This is only natural. St. Luke knew of the earlier history by information gained from various persons, but he knew of the later history, and specially of St. Paul's journeys, by personal experience. He could say that he had formed a portion and played no small part in the work of which he was telling, and therefore St. Paul's activity

naturally supplies the chief subject of his narrative. St. Luke in this respect was exactly like ourselves. What we take an active part in, where our own powers are specially called into operation, there our interest is specially aroused. St. Luke personally knew of St. Paul's missionary journeys and labours, and therefore when telling Theophilus of the history of the Church down to the year 60 or thereabouts, he deals with that part of it which he specially knows. This limitation of St. Luke's vision limits also our range of exposition. The earlier portion of the Acts is much richer from an expositor's point of view, comprises more typical narratives, scenes, events than the latter portion, though this latter portion may be richer in points of contact, historical and geographical, with the world of life and action.

It is with an expositor or preacher exactly the opposite as with the Church historian or biographer of St. Paul. A writer gifted with the exuberant imagination, the minute knowledge of a Rénan or a Farrar naturally finds in the details of travel with which the latter portion of the Acts is crowded matter for abundant discussion. He can pour forth the treasures of information which modern archæological research has furnished shedding light upon the movements of the Apostle. But with the preacher or expositor it is otherwise. There are numerous incidents which lend themselves to his purpose in the journeys recorded in this latter portion of the book; but while a preacher might find endless subjects for spiritual exposition in the conversion of St. Paul or the martyrdom of St. Stephen, he finds himself confined to historical and geographical discussions in large portions of the story dealing with St. Paul's journeys. We

shall, however, strive to unite both functions, and while endeavouring to treat the history from an expositor's point of view, we shall not overlook details of another type which will impart colour and interest to the exposition.

I. The thirteenth chapter of the Acts records the opening of St. Paul's official missionary labours, and its earliest verses tell us of the formal separation or consecration for that work which St. Paul received. Now the question may here be raised, Why did St. Paul receive such a solemn ordination as that we here read of? Had he not been called by Christ immediately? Had he not been designated to the work in Gentile lands by the voice of the same Jesus Christ speaking to Ananias at Damascus and afterwards to Paul himself in the Temple at Jerusalem? What was the necessity for such a solemn external imposition of hands as that here recorded? John Calvin, in his commentary on this passage, offers a very good suggestion, and shows that he was able to throw himself back into the feelings and ideas of the times far better than many a modern writer. Calvin thinks that this revelation of the Holy Ghost and this ordination by the hands of the Antiochene prophets were absolutely necessary to complete the work begun by St. Peter at Cæsarea, and for this reason. The prejudices of the Jewish Christians against their Gentile brethren were so strong, that they would regard the vision at Joppa as applying, not as a general rule, but as a mere personal matter, authorising the reception of Cornelius and his party alone. They would not see nor understand that it authorised the active evangelisation of the Gentile world and the prosecution of aggressive Christian efforts among the heathen. The Holy Ghost therefore, as the abiding and guiding



power in the Church, and expressing His will through the agency of the prophets then present, said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them"; and that work to which they were expressly sent forth by the Holy Ghost was the work of aggressive effort beginning with the Jews—but not terminating with them—and including the Gentiles. This seems to me thoroughly true, and shows how Calvin realised the intellectual weakness, the spiritual hardness of heart and slowness of judgment which prevailed among the apostles. The battle of Christian freedom and of catholic truth was not won in a moment. Old prejudices did not depart in an hour. New principles were not assimilated and applied in a few days. Those who hold nobler views and higher principles than the crowd must not be surprised or dismayed if they find that year after year they have to fight the same battles and to proclaim the same fundamental truths and to maintain what may seem at times even a losing conflict with the forces of unreasoning prejudices. If this was the case in the primitive Church with all its unity and love and spiritual gifts, we may well expect the same state of affairs in the Church of our time.<sup>1</sup>

An illustration borrowed from Church history will explain this. Nothing can well be more completely

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<sup>1</sup> One great lesson which the true expositor will derive from this typical history is this, the long, doubtful, painful strife which the battle of truth and justice ever involves. The struggle for Gentile freedom waged by St. Paul is typical of the battle for freedom of conscience, for freedom of knowledge, for human rights against slavery, and of every other battle against tyranny and wrong which the world has ever seen. The combat has ever been long and wearisome, and the chiefest of God's champions have always been compelled to suffer much for their support of the truth, which must, however, triumph in the long run.

contrary to the spirit of Christianity than religious persecution. Nothing can be imagined more completely consonant with the spirit of the Christian religion than freedom of conscience. Yet how hard has been the struggle for it! The early Christians suffered in defence of religious freedom, but they had no sooner gained the battle than they adopted the very principle against which they had fought. They became religiously intolerant, because religious intolerance was part and parcel of the Roman state under which they had been reared. The Reformation again was a battle for religious freedom. If it were not, the Reformers who suffered in it would have no more claim to our compassion and sympathy on account of the deaths they suffered than soldiers who die in battle. A soldier merely suffers what he is prepared to inflict, and so it was with the martyrs of the Reformation unless theirs was a struggle for religious freedom. Yet no sooner had the battle of the Reformation been won than all the Reformed Churches adopted the very principle which had striven to crush themselves. It is terribly difficult to emancipate ourselves from the influence and ideas of bygone ages, and so it was with the Jewish Christians. They could not bring themselves to adopt missionary work among the Gentiles. They believed indeed intellectually that God had granted unto the Gentiles repentance unto life, but that belief was not accompanied with any of the enthusiasm which alone lends life and power to mental conceptions. The Holy Ghost therefore, as the Paraclete, the loving Comforter, Exhorter, and Guide of the Church, interposes afresh, and by a new revelation ordains apostles whose great work shall consist in preaching to the Gentile world.

This seems to me one great reason for the prominent place this incident at Antioch holds. The work of Gentile conversion proceeded from Antioch, which may therefore well be regarded as the mother Church of Gentile Christendom; and the apostles of the Gentiles were there solemnly set apart and constituted. Barnabas and Saul were not previously called apostles. Henceforth this title is expressly applied to them,<sup>1</sup> and independent apostolic action is taken by them. But there seems to me another reason why Barnabas and Saul were thus solemnly set apart, notwithstanding all their previous gifts and callings and history. The Holy Ghost wished to lay down at the very beginning of the Gentile Church the law of orderly development, the rule of external ordination, and the necessity for its perpetual observance. And therefore He issued His mandate for their visible separation to the work of evangelisation. All the circumstances too are typical. The Church was engaged in a season of special devotion when the Holy Ghost spoke. A special blessing was vouchsafed, as before at Pentecost, when the people of God were specially waiting upon Him. The Church at Antioch as represented by its leading teachers were fasting and praying and ministering to the Lord when

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, ch. xiv. 4: "Part held with the Jews and part with the apostles"; and again, verse 14: "But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it." It must be remembered that the term apostle was one used very freely among the Jews to signify the official delegates of the high priest, the Sanhedrin, or even the smallest synagogue. It has, however, gained a sanctity and special application in the Christian Church which causes a certain amount of mental confusion. At the same time, we must remember that the title apostle was continued in the primitive Church after the age of the Twelve. It was applied to their successors, as we learn from the *Didache*, xi.; *Hermas*, Sim. ix.; 15, 16, 25. Cf. Origen on John iv., and Euseb., *H. E.*, i. 12.

the Divine mandate was issued, and then they fasted and prayed again. The ordination of the first apostles to the Gentiles was accompanied by special prayer and by fasting, and the Church took good care afterwards to follow closely this primitive example. The institution of the four Ember seasons as times for solemn ordinations is derived from this incident. The Ember seasons are periods for solemn prayer and fasting, not only for those about to be ordained, but also for the whole Church, because she recognises that the whole body of Christ's people are interested most deeply and vitally in the nature and character of the Christian ministry. If the members of that ministry are devoted, earnest, inspired with Divine love, then indeed the work of Christ flourishes in the Church, while if the ministry of God be careless and unspiritual, the people of God suffer terrible injury. And we observe, further, that not only the Church subsequent to the apostolic age followed this example at Antioch, but St. Paul himself followed it and prescribed it to his disciples. He ordained elders in every Church, and that from the beginning. He acted thus on his very first missionary journey, ordaining by the imposition of hands accompanied with prayer and fasting, as we learn from the fourteenth chapter and twenty-third verse. He reminded Timothy of the gift imparted to that youthful evangelist by the imposition of St. Paul's own hands, as well as by those of the presbytery; and yet he does not hesitate to designate the elders of Ephesus and Miletus who were thus ordained by St. Paul as bishops set over God's flock by the Holy Ghost Himself. St. Paul and the Apostolic Church, in fact, looked behind this visible scene. They realised vividly the truth of Christ's promise about the presence of the

Holy Ghost in the Church. They took no miserably low and Erastian views of the sacred ministry, as if it were an office of mere human order and appointment. They viewed it as a supernatural and Divine office, which no mere human power, no matter how exalted, could confer. They realised the human instruments indeed in their true position as nothing but instruments, powerless in themselves, and mighty only through God, and therefore St. Paul regarded his own ordination of the elders whom he appointed at Derbe, Iconium, Lystra, or Ephesus as a separation by the Holy Ghost to their Divine offices. The Church was, in fact, then instinct with life and spiritual vigour, because it thankfully recognised the present power, the living force and vigour of the third person of the Holy Trinity.

II. The apostles having been thus commissioned lost no time. They at once departed upon their great work. And now let us briefly indicate the scope of the first great missionary tour undertaken by St. Paul, and sketch its outline, filling in the details afterwards. According to early tradition the headquarters of the Antiochene Church were in Singon Street, in the southern quarter of Antioch.<sup>1</sup> After earnest and prolonged religious services they left their Christian brethren. St. Paul's own practice recorded at Ephesus, Miletus, and at Tyre shows us that prayer marked such separation from the Christian brethren, and we know that the same practice was perpetuated in the early Church; Tertullian, for instance, telling us that a brother should not leave a Christian house until he had been commended to God's

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<sup>1</sup> An elaborate plan of ancient Antioch, accompanied with a description of its various parts and references to the authorities for the same, will be found in Lewin's *St. Paul*, vol. i., p. 92.

keeping. They then crossed the bridge, and proceeded along the northern bank of the Orontes to Seleucia, the port of Antioch, where the ruins still testify to the vastness of the architectural conceptions cherished by the Syrian kings. From Seleucia the apostles sailed to the island of Cyprus, whose peaks they could see eighty miles distant shining bright and clear through the pellucid air. Various circumstances would lead them thither. Barnabas was of Cyprus, and he doubtless had many friends there. Cyprus had then an immense Jewish population, as we have already pointed out; and though the apostles were specially designated for work among the Gentiles, they ever made the Jews the starting-point whence to influence the outside world, always used them as the lever whereby to move the stolid mass of paganism. The apostles showed a wholesome example to all missionaries and to all teachers by this method of action. They addressed the Jews first because they had most in common with them. And St. Paul deliberately and of set purpose worked on this principle, whether with Jews or Gentiles. He sought out the ideas or the ground common to himself and his hearers, and then, having found the points on which they agreed, he worked out from them. It is the true method of controversy. I have seen the opposite course adopted, and with very disastrous effects. I have seen a method of controversial argument pursued, consisting simply in attacks upon errors without any attempt to follow the apostolic example and discover the truths which both parties held in common, and the result has been the very natural one, that ill-will and bad feeling have been aroused without effecting any changes in conviction. We can easily understand the reason of this, if we consider how the matter would stand with

ourselves. If a man comes up to us, and without any attempt to discover our ideas or enter into sympathetic relations with us, makes a very aggressive assault upon all our particular notions and practices, our backs are at once put up, we are thrown into a defensive mood, our pride is stirred, we resent the tone, the air of the aggressor, and unconsciously determine not to be convinced by him. Controversial preaching of that class, hard, unloving, censorious, never does any permanent good, but rather strengthens and confirms the person against whose belief it is directed. Nothing of this kind will ever be found in the wise, courteous teaching of the apostle Paul, whose few recorded speeches to Jews and Gentiles may be commended to the careful study of all teachers at home or abroad as models of mission preaching, being at once prudent and loving, faithful and courageous.

From Seleucia the apostles itinerated through the whole island unto Paphos, celebrated in classical antiquity as the favourite seat of the goddess Venus, where they came for the first time into contact with a great Roman official, Sergius Paulus, the proconsul of the island. From Paphos they sailed across to the mainland of Asia Minor, landed at Perga, where John Mark abandoned the work to which he had put his hand. They do not seem to have stayed for long at Perga. They doubtless declared their message at the local synagogue to the Jews and proselytes who assembled there, for we are not to conclude, because a synagogue is not expressly mentioned as belonging to any special town, that therefore it did not exist. Modern discoveries have shown that Jewish synagogues were found in every considerable town or city of Asia Minor, preparing the way by their pure morality



and monotheistic teaching for the fuller and richer truths of Christianity.<sup>1</sup> But St. Paul had fixed his eagle gaze upon Antioch of Pisidia, a town which had been made by Augustus Cæsar the great centre of this part of Asia Minor, whence military roads radiated in every direction, lending thereby the assistance of imperial organisation to the progress of the gospel. Its situation was, in fact, the circumstance which determined the original foundation of Antioch by the Syrian princes.<sup>2</sup>

Facility of access, commercial convenience were points at which they chiefly aimed in selecting the sites of the cities they built, and the wisdom of their choice in the case of Antioch in Pisidia was confirmed when Augustus and Tiberius, some few years previous to St. Paul's visit, made Antioch the centre from which diverged the whole system of military roads throughout this portion of Asia Minor. It was a very large city, and its ruins and aqueducts testify to this day concerning the important position it held as the great centre of all the Roman colonies and fortresses which Augustus planted in the year B.C. 6 along the skirts of the Taurus Range to restrain the incursions of the rude mountaineers of Isauria and Pisidia. When persecution compelled the apostles to retire from Antioch they took

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<sup>1</sup> Hypæpa, for instance, was a celebrated sanctuary of Diana, between Sardis and Ephesus. Jewish inscriptions have been found there proving that a Jewish synagogue and community existed even in that pagan stronghold: see *Revue Archéologique* for 1885, vol. ii., p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> There is a series of plates in Lewin's *Life of St. Paul*, vol. i., pp. 130-36, depicting the site and ruins of Antioch, and showing the roads which connected it with all the leading towns of the neighbourhood, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe. Professor Ramsay, in his *Historical Geography of Asia Minor*, bestows a good deal of attention on Antioch of Pisidia and its position: see pp. 47, 57, 85, 391, 453.

their way therefore to Iconium, which was some sixty miles south-east of Antioch along one of these military roads of which we have spoken, constructed for the purpose of putting down the brigands which then, as in modern times, constituted one of the great plagues of Asia Minor.<sup>1</sup> But why did the apostles retire to Iconium? Surely one might say, if the Jews had influence enough at Antioch to stir up the chief men of the city against the missionaries, they would have had influence enough to secure a warrant for their arrest in a neighbouring city. At first sight it seems somewhat difficult to account for the line of travel or flight adopted by the apostles. But a reference to ancient geography throws some light upon the problem. Strabo, a geographer of St. Paul's own day, tells us that Iconium was an independent principality or tetrarchy, surrounded indeed on all sides by Roman territory, but still enjoying a certain amount of independence. The apostles fled to Iconium when persecution waxed hot because they had a good road thither, and also because at Iconium they were secure from any legal molestation being under a new jurisdiction.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> St. Paul, writing in 2nd Corinthians, speaks of himself as at times in perils of robbers. This danger may well have happened to him in the central districts of Asia Minor. There is an interesting story of St. John and the bandits in Eusebius, *H. E.*, iii., 23. The incidents there told took place in Asia Minor.

<sup>2</sup> Iconium was in St. Paul's day the centre of an independent tetrarchy ruled by native princes. See Pliny's *Nat. Hist.*, v. 27. The site of Iconium has never been uncertain. It was made the capital of their dominions by the Sultans of the Seldjuk Turks, and continued to occupy that position till the conquest of Constantinople. It is still called Konia, a modification of its original name, and still continues to attract a large population on account of the beauty and convenience of its situation, which gives it the title of the Damascus of Asia Minor. According to tradition Sosipatros, one of the seventy disciples, was the

After a time, however, the Jews from Antioch made their way to Iconium and began the same process which had proved so successful at Antioch. They first excited the members of the Jewish synagogue against the apostles, and through them influenced the townspeople at large, so that, though successful in winning converts, St. Paul and his companion were in danger of being stoned by a joint mob of Jews and Gentiles. They had therefore to fly a second time, and when doing so they acted on the same principle as before. They again removed themselves out of the local jurisdiction of their enemies, and passed to Derbe and Lystra, cities of Lycaonia, a Roman province which had just been formed by the Emperor Claudius.<sup>1</sup>

Then after a time, when the disturbances which the Jews persistently raised wherever they came had subsided, the apostles returned back over the same ground, no longer indeed publicly preaching, but organising

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bishop of Iconium, and was succeeded by Terentius, another member of the same sacred company; *Acta Sanctorum*, June 20th, p. 67; Ramsay, *Historical Geography of Asia Minor*, p. 332. The latest account of Iconium as it is at present will be found in Sterrett's *Epigraphical Journey in Asia Minor*, printed among the Papers of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Boston, 1884. vol. ii., p. 188-225.

<sup>1</sup> The apostles seem to have acted as in former times persons harassed by legal processes could do in this country. A writ directed to a sheriff only ran within his own county. A man could not be arrested under it if he passed one step beyond the county bounds, till countersigned by the sheriff of the county into which the delinquent had passed. Under the Roman empire the local liberties and jurisdictions were simply infinite, a fact which of course lent much assistance to persons persecuted as the apostles were. Derbe, for instance, was a native city of Lycaonia, and belonged to the Koinon or local assembly of that province. Lystra was situated indeed in Lycaonia, but being a Roman colony had therefore exceptional privileges, and scorned to belong to the local Assembly of native cities. See Ramsay, *Hist. Geog.*, pp. 332, 375, 376.

quietly and secretly the Churches which they had founded in the different towns through which they had passed, till they arrived back at Perga, where perhaps, finding no ship sailing to Antioch, they travelled to the port of Attalia, where they succeeded in finding a passage to that city of Antioch whence they had been sent forth.<sup>1</sup> This brief sketch will give a general view of the first missionary tour made in the realms of paganism, and will show that it dealt with little more than two provinces of Asia Minor, Pisidia and Lycaonia, and was followed by what men would count but scanty results, the foundation and organisation of a few scattered Christian communities in some of the leading towns of these districts.

III. Let us now more particularly notice some of the details recorded concerning this journey. The apostles began their work at Cyprus, where they proclaimed the gospel in the Jewish synagogues. They were attracted as we have said to this island, first, because it was the native land of Barnabas, and then because its population was in large degree Jewish, owing to the possession of the famous copper mines of the island by Herod the Great.<sup>2</sup> Synagogues were scattered all over the island and proselytes appertained to each synagogue, and thus a basis of operations was ready whence the gospel message might operate. It was just the same even at Paphos, where St. Paul came in contact with the proconsul Sergius Paulus. The Jewish element here again appears, though in more active opposition than seems to have been elsewhere offered. Sergius Paulus was a Roman citizen like Cornelius of Cæsarea.

<sup>1</sup> It is well perhaps to note that the *ι* in this name is long, representing the diphthong *ει*, the Greek name of the town being Ἀττάλεια.

<sup>2</sup> See vol. i., p. 216.

He had become dissatisfied with the belief of his forefathers. He had now come into contact with the mystic East, and had yielded himself to the guidance of a man who professed the Jewish religion, which seems to have charmed by its pure morality and simple monotheism many of the noblest minds of that age. But, like all outsiders, Sergius Paulus did not make accurate and just distinctions between man and man. He yielded himself to the guidance of a man who traded on the name of a Jew, but who really practised those rites of weird sorcery which real Judaism utterly repudiated and denounced. This alone accounts for the stern language of St. Paul: "O full of all guile and all villany, thou son of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" St. Paul never addressed a lawful opponent in this manner. He did not believe in the efficacy of strong language in itself, nor did he abuse those who withstood him in honest argument. But he did not hesitate, on the other hand, to brand a deceiver as he deserved, or to denounce in scathing terms those who were guilty of conscious fraud. St. Paul might well be taken as a model controversialist in this respect. He knew how to distinguish between the genuine opponent who might be mistaken but was certainly conscientious, and the fraudulent hypocrite devoid of all convictions save the conviction of the value of money. With the former St. Paul was full of courtesy, patience, consideration, because he had in himself experience of the power of blind unthinking prejudice. For the latter class St. Paul had no consideration, and with them he wasted no time. His honest soul took their measure at once. He denounced them as he did Elymas on this occasion, and then passed on to deal

with nobler and purer souls, where honest and good hearts offered more promising soil for the reception of the Word of the Kingdom. Controversy of every kind is very trying to tongue and temper, but religious controversy such as that in which St. Paul spent his life is specially trying to the character. The subject is so important that it seems to excuse an over zeal and earnestness which terminates in bad temper and unwise language. And yet we sometimes cannot shrink from controversy, because conscience demands it on our part. When that happens to be the case, it will be well for us to exercise the most rigorous control over our feelings and our words ; from time to time to realise by a momentary effort of introspection Christ hanging upon the cross and bearing for us the unworthy and unjust reproaches of mankind ; for thus and thus only will pride be kept down and hot temper restrained and that great advantage for the truth secured which self-control always bestows upon its possessor.

There is an interesting illustration of the historic accuracy of St. Luke connected with the apostolic visit to Paphos and to Sergius Paulus the proconsul. Thrice over in the narrative of St. Luke, Sergius Paulus is called proconsul—first in the seventh verse of the thirteenth chapter, where Elymas the sorcerer is described thus, “who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of understanding,” while again the same title of proconsul is applied to Sergius in the eighth and twelfth verses. This has been the cause of much misunderstanding and of no small reproach hurled against the sacred writer. Let us inquire into its justice and the facts of the case. The Roman provinces were divided into two classes, senatorial and imperial. The senatorial provinces were ruled by proconsuls



appointed by the Senate; the imperial by proprætors appointed by the emperors. This arrangement was made by Augustus Cæsar, and is reported to us by Strabo who lived and wrote during St. Paul's early manhood. But now a difficulty arises. Strabo gives us the list of the provinces senatorial and imperial alike, and expressly classes Cyprus amongst the imperial provinces, which were ruled by proprætors and not by proconsuls. In the opinion of the older critics, St. Luke was thus plainly convicted of a mistake and of a flagrant contradiction of that great authority the geographer Strabo. But it is never safe to jump to conclusions of that kind with respect to a contemporaneous writer who has proved himself accurate on other occasions. It is far better and far safer to say, Let us wait awhile, and see what further investigations will reveal. And so it has proved in this special case. Strabo tells us of the original arrangement made about thirty years B.C. between the Emperor Augustus and the Senate, when Cyprus was most certainly numbered amongst the imperial provinces; but he omits to tell us what another historian of the same century, Dion Cassius, does relate, that the same Emperor modified this arrangement five years later, handing Cyprus and Gallia Narbonensis over to the rule of the Senate, so that from that date and henceforth throughout the first century of our era Cyprus was governed by proconsuls alone, as St. Luke most accurately, though only incidentally, reports.<sup>1</sup> Here, too,

<sup>1</sup> The words of Dion are: "Eo tempore Cyprum ac Galliam Narbonensem, quia nihil armis suis indigerent, populo reddidit; atque ita proconsules etiam in istas provincias mitti cœperunt." See the works of Dion, edited by H. Valerius, vol. i., p. 733 (Hamburg, 1750). Valerius, in his note on this passage, notes the inaccuracies into which the older critics—Grotius, Hammond, Baronius—had fallen about Acts xiii. 7.



the results of modern investigation among inscriptions and coins have come in to supplement and support the testimony of historians. The Greek inscriptions discovered prior to and during the earlier half of this century have been collected together in Boeckh's *Corpus of Greek Inscriptions*, which is, indeed, a vast repertory of original documents concerning the life, Pagan and Christian, of the Greek world. In the inscriptions numbered 2631 and 2632 in that valuable work we have the names of Q. Julius Cordus and L. Annius Bassus expressly mentioned as proconsuls of Cyprus in A.D. 51, 52 ; while on coins of Cyprus have been found the names of Cominius Proclus and Quadratus, who held the same office. But the very latest investigations have borne striking testimony to the same fact. The name of the very proconsul whom St. Paul addressed appears on an inscription discovered in our own time. Cyprus has been thoroughly investigated since it passed into British hands, specially by General Cesnola, who has written a work on the subject which is well worth reading by those who take an interest in Scripture lands and the scenes where the apostles laboured. In that work, p. 425, Cesnola tells us of a mutilated inscription which he recovered dealing with some subject of no special importance, but bearing the following precious notice giving its date as "Under Paulus the Proconsul"; proving to us by contemporary evidence that Sergius Paulus ruled the island, and ruled it with the special title of proconsul. Surely an instance like this—and we shall have several such to notice—is quite enough to make fair minds suspend their judgment when charges of inaccuracy are alleged against St. Luke dependent upon our own ignorance alone of the entire facts of the case. A wider knowledge, a larger investigation we

may well be sure will suffice to clear the difficulty and vindicate the fair fame of the sacred historian.

From Cyprus the apostles passed over to the continent, and opened their missionary work at Antioch of Pisidia, where the first recorded address of St. Paul was delivered. This sermon, delivered in the Pisidian synagogue, is deserving of our special notice because it is the only missionary address delivered by St. Paul to the Jews of the Dispersion which has been handed down to us, unless we include the few words delivered to the Roman Jews reported in the twenty-eighth chapter from the seventeenth to the twenty-eighth verses. Let us briefly analyse it, premising that it should be carefully compared with the addresses of St. Peter to the Jews upon the Day of Pentecost and with the speech delivered by St. Stephen before the Sanhedrin, when all three will be found to run upon the same lines. The apostles having reached Antioch waited until the Sabbath came round, and then sought the local meeting-place of the Jews. The apostles felt indeed that they were entrusted with a great mission important for the human race, but yet they knew right well that feverish impetuosity or restless activity was not the true way to advance the cause they had in hand. They did not believe in wild irregular actions which only stir up opposition. They were calm and dignified in their methods, because they were consciously guided by the Divine Spirit of Him concerning whom it was said in the days of His flesh, "He did not strive nor cry, neither did any man hear His voice in the streets." On the Sabbath day they entered the synagogue, and took their place on a bench set apart for the reception of those who were regarded as teachers. At the conclu-

sion of the public worship and the reading of the lessons out of the law and the prophets, such as still are read in the synagogue worship, the Rulers of the Synagogue sent to them the minister or apostle of the synagogue intimating their permission to address the assembled congregation, whereupon St. Paul arose and delivered an address, of which the following is an analysis. St. Paul opened his sermon by a reference to the lessons which had just been read in the service, which—as all the writers of the Apostle's life, Lewin, Conybeare and Howson, and Archdeacon Farrar, agree—were taken from the first chapter of Deuteronomy and the first of Isaiah. He points out, as St. Stephen had done, the providential dealings of God with their forefathers from the time of the original choice of Abraham down to David. The Jews had been divinely guided throughout their history down to David's days, and that Divine guidance had not then ceased, but continued down to the present, as the Apostle then proceeds to show. In David's seed there had been left a hope for Israel which every true Jew still cherished. He then announces that the long-cherished hope had now at last been fulfilled. This fact depended not on his testimony alone. The Messiah whom they had long expected had been preceded by a prophet whose reputation had spread into these distant regions, and had gained disciples, as we shall afterwards find, at Ephesus. John the Baptist had announced the Messiah's appearance, and proclaimed his own inferiority to Him. But then an objection occurs to the Apostle which might naturally be raised. If John's reputation and doctrine had penetrated to Antioch, the story of the crucifixion of Jesus may also have been reported there, and the local Jews may therefore have concluded that

such an ignominious death was conclusive against the claims of Jesus? The Apostle then proceeds to show how that the providential rule of God had been exercised even in that matter. The wrath of man had been compelled to praise God, and even while the rulers at Jerusalem were striving to crush Jesus Christ they were in reality fulfilling the voices of the prophets which went beforehand and proclaimed the sufferings of the Messiah exactly as they had happened. And further still, God had set His seal to the truth of the story by raising Jesus Christ from the dead according to the predictions of the Old Testament, which he expounds after the manner of the Jewish schools, finding a hint of the Resurrection of Christ in Isaiah lv. 3: "I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David"; and a still clearer one in Psalm xvi. 10: "Thou wilt not give Thine Holy One to see corruption." The Apostle, after quoting this text, which from its use by St. Peter on the Day of Pentecost seems to have been a passage commonly quoted in the Jewish controversy, terminates his discourse with a proclamation of the exalted blessings which the Messiah has brought, indicating briefly but clearly the universal character of the gospel promises, and finishing with a warning against stupid obstinate resistance drawn from Habakkuk i. 5, which primarily referred to the disbelief in impending Chaldæan invasion exhibited by the Jews, but which the Apostle applies to the Jews of Antioch and their spiritual dangers arising from similar wilful obstinacy.

We have of course not much more than the heads of the apostolic sermon. Five or seven minutes of a not very rapid speaker would amply suffice to exhaust the exact words attributed to St. Paul. He must have enlarged on the various topics. He could not have

introduced John the Baptist in the abrupt manner in which he is noticed in the text of our New Testament. It seems quite natural enough to us that he should be thus named, because John occupies a very high and exalted position in our mental horizon from our earliest childhood. But who was John the Baptist for these Jewish settlers in the Pisidian Antioch? He was simply a prophet of whom they may have heard a vague report, who appeared before Israel for a year or two, and then suffered death at the hands of Herod the Tetrarch: and so it must have been with many other topics introduced into this discourse. They must have been much more copiously treated, elaborated, discussed, or else the audience in the Pisidian synagogue must have loved concentrated discourse more keenly than any other assembly that ever met together. And yet, though ~~the~~ real discourse must have been much longer—and did we only possess the sermon in its fulness many a difficulty which now puzzles us would disappear at once—we can still see the line of the apostolic argument and grasp its force. The Apostle argues, in fact, that God had chosen the original fathers of the Jewish race. He had gone on conferring ever fresh and larger blessings in the wilderness, in Canaan, under the Judges, and then under the Kings, till the time of David, from whose seed God had raised up the greatest gift of all in the person of Jesus Christ, through whom blessings unknown before and unsurpassed were offered to mankind. St. Paul contends exactly as St. Stephen had done, that true religion has been a perpetual advance and development; that Christianity is not something distinct from Judaism, but is essentially one with it, being the flower of a plant which God Himself had planted, the crown

and glory of the work which He had Himself begun. This address, as we have already noticed in the preface to the first volume of this work, will repay careful study; for it shows the methods adopted by the early Christian when dealing with the Jews.<sup>1</sup> They did not attack any of their peculiar views or practices, but confining themselves to what they held in common strove to convince them that Christianity was the logical outcome of their own principles.

The results of this address were very indicative of the future. The Jews of the synagogue seem to have been for a time impressed by St. Paul's words. Several of them, together with a number of the proselytes, attached themselves to him as his disciples, and were further instructed in the faith. The proselytes especially must have been attracted by the Apostle's words. They were, like Cornelius, Proselytes of the Gate, who observed merely the seven precepts of Noah and renounced idolatry, but were not circumcised or subject to the restrictions and duties of the Jewish ritual. They must have welcomed tidings of a religion embodying all that which they venerated in the Jewish Law and yet devoid of its narrowness and disadvantages.

Next Sabbath the whole city was stirred with excitement, and then Jewish jealousy burst into a flame. They saw that their national distinctions and glory were in danger. They refused to listen or permit any further proclamation of what must have seemed to them a revolutionary teaching disloyal to the traditions and existence of their religion and their nation. They used their influence therefore with the chief men of the city, exercising it through their wives, who were

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. vol. i., pp. xi, 300.

in many cases attracted by the Jewish worship, or who may have been themselves of Jewish birth, and the result was that the apostles were driven forth to preach in other cities of the same central region of Asia Minor. This was the first attack made by the Jews upon St. Paul in his mission journeys. He had already had experience of their hostility at Damascus and at Jerusalem, but this hostility was doubtless provoked by reason of their resentment at the apostasy to the Nazarene sect of their chosen champion. But here at Antioch we perceive the first symptom of that bitter hostility to St. Paul because of his catholic principles, his proclamation of salvation as open to all alike, Jew or Gentile, free from any burdensome or restrictive conditions, a hostility which we shall find persistently pursuing him, both within the Church, and still more without the Church, at Iconium, at Lystra, at Thessalonica, at Corinth, and at Jerusalem. It would seem indeed as if the invention of the term "Christian" at Antioch marked a crisis in the history of the early Church. Henceforth St. Paul and his friends became the objects of keenest hatred, because the Jews had recognised that they taught a form of belief absolutely inconsistent with the Jewish faith as hitherto known; a hatred which seems, however, to have been limited to St. Paul and his Antiochene friends, for the temporising measures and the personal prejudices, the whole atmosphere, in fact, of the Jerusalem Church led the unbelieving Jews to make a broad distinction between the disciples at Jerusalem and the followers of St. Paul.

IV. So far we have dealt with St. Paul's address at Antioch as typical of his methods in dealing with the Jews, and their treatment of the Apostle as typical of that hostility which the Jews ever displayed to the earliest



teachers of Christian truth, as witnessed not only by the New Testament, but also by the writings and histories of Justin Martyr, and of Polycarp of Smyrna, and of all the early apologists. But we are not left in this typical Church history without a specimen of St. Paul's earlier methods when dealing with the heathen. St. Paul, after his rejection at Antioch, escaped to Iconium, sixty miles distant, and thence, when Jewish persecution again waxed hot, betook himself to Lystra, some forty miles to the south. There the Apostle found himself in a new atmosphere and amid new surroundings. Antioch and Iconium had large Jewish populations, and were permeated with Jewish ideas. Lystra was a thoroughly Gentile town with only a very few Jewish inhabitants. The whole air of the place—its manners, customs, popular legends—was thoroughly pagan. This offered St. Paul a new field for his activity, of which he availed himself right diligently, finishing up his work with healing a lifelong cripple, a miracle which so impressed the mob of Lystra that they immediately cried out in the native speech of Lycaonia, "The gods are coming down to us in the likeness of men," calling Barnabas Jupiter, on account of his lofty stature and more commanding appearance, and Paul Mercurius or Hermes, because of his more insignificant size and more copious eloquence. Here again we have, in our writer's words, an incidental and even unconscious witness to the truth of our narrative. The cry of the men of Lystra, these rude barbarian people of the original inhabitants of the land, who, though they could understand Greek, naturally fell back on their native Lycaonian language to express their deeper feelings,—this cry, I say, refers to an ancient legend connected with their history, of which we find a lengthened

account in the works of the poet Ovid. Jupiter attended by Mercury once descended to visit the earth and see how man was faring. Some scoffed at the deities, and were punished. Others received them, and were blessed accordingly.<sup>1</sup> The wondrous work performed on the cripple naturally led the men of Lystra to think that the Divine Epiphany had been repeated. The colony of Lystra—for Lystra was a Roman colony<sup>2</sup>—was devoted to the worship of Jupiter, in memory doubtless of this celebrated visit. A temple to Jupiter stood before and outside the gate of the city, as the temple of Diana stood outside the gate of Ephesus, lending sanctity and protection to the neighbouring town. The priest and the people act upon the spur of the moment. They bring victims and garlands prepared to offer sacrifice to the deities who, as they thought, had revisited their ancient haunts. They were approaching the house where the apostles were dwelling—perhaps that of Lois and Eunice and Timothy—when Paul sprang forward and delivered a short impassioned address deprecating the threatened adoration. Let us quote the address in order that we may see its full force: “Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and bring you good tidings, that ye should turn from these vain things unto the living God, who made the heaven and the

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<sup>1</sup> See the story of Philemon and Baucis as told in Smith's *Dictionary of Classical Biography and Mythology*.

<sup>2</sup> The site of Lystra and the fact that it was a Roman colony were unknown till 1884, when Sterrett discovered an inscription which ascertained both facts: see Ramsay's *Historical Geography of Asia Minor*, p. 332, and Sterrett's *Epigraph. Journey*, already quoted, from “Papers of American School at Athens,” vol. iii., p. 142 (Boston, 1888). Artemas, one of the seventy disciples, is said to have been bishop of Lystra: see *Acta Sanct.*, June 20th, p. 67.

earth and the sea, and all that in them is : who in the generations gone by suffered all the nations to walk in their own ways. And yet He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness." How very different St. Paul's words to the pagans are from those he addressed to the Jews and proselytes, believers in the true God and in the facts of revelation ! He proves himself a born orator, able to adapt himself to different classes of hearers, and, grasping their special ideas and feelings, to suit his arguments to their various conditions. St. Paul's short address on this occasion may be compared with his speech to the men of Athens, and the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and the various apologies composed by the earliest advocates of Christianity during the second century. Take, for instance, the Apology of Aristides, of which we gave an account in the preface to the first volume of this commentary on the Acts. We shall find, when we examine it and compare it with the various passages of Scripture to which we have just referred, that all run upon exactly the same lines. They all appeal to the evidence of nature and of natural religion. They say not one word about Scripture concerning which their hearers know nothing. They are not like unwise Christian advocates among ourselves who think they can overthrow an infidel with a text out of Scripture, begging the question at issue, the very point to be decided being this, whether there is such a thing at all as Scripture. St. Paul does with the men of Lystra and the men of Athens what Aristides did when writing for the Emperor Hadrian, and what every wise missionary will still do with the heathen or the unbeliever

whose salvation he is seeking. The Apostle takes up the ground that is common to himself and his hearers. He shows them the unworthiness of the conception they have formed of the Godhead. He appeals to the testimony of God's works and to the interior witness of conscience prophesying perpetually in the secret tabernacle of man's heart, and thus appealing in God's behalf to the eternal verities and evidences of nature exterior and interior to man, he vindicates the Divine authority, glorifies the Divine character, and restrains the capricious and ignorant folly of the men of Lystra.

Lastly, we find in this narrative two typical suggestions for the missionary activity of the Church in every age. The men of Lystra with marvellous facility soon changed their opinion concerning St. Paul. M. Rénan has well pointed out that to the pagans of those times a miracle was no necessary proof of a Divine mission. It was just as easily a proof to them of a diabolical or magical power. The Jews, therefore, who followed St. Paul, had no difficulty in persuading the men of Lystra that this assailant of their hereditary deities was a mere charlatan, a clever trickster moved by wicked powers to lead them astray. Their character and reputation as Jews, worshippers of one God alone, would lend weight to this charge, and enable them the more easily to effect their purpose of killing St. Paul, in which they had failed at Antioch and Iconium. The fickle mob easily lent themselves to the purposes of the Jews, and having stoned St. Paul dragged his body outside the city walls, thinking him dead. A few faithful disciples followed the crowd, however. Perhaps, too, the eirenarch or local police authority with his subordinates had interfered, and the rioters, apprehensive of punishment for their disturbance of the peace,

had retired.<sup>1</sup> As the disciples stood around weeping for the loss they had sustained, the Apostle awoke from the swoon into which he had fallen, and was carried into the city by the faithful few, among whom doubtless were Timothy and his parents. Lystra, however, was no longer safe for St. Paul. He retired, therefore, some twenty miles to Derbe, where he continued for some time labouring with success, till the storm and the excitement had subsided at Lystra. Then he returned back over the same ground which he had already traversed. He might have pushed on along the great Eastern Road, nigh as Derbe was to the passes through the Taurus Range which led directly to Cilicia and Tarsus. He wished to go back indeed to Antioch. He had been a year or so absent on this first excursion into the vast fields of Gentile paganism. Wider and more extensive missions had now to be planned. The wisdom gained by personal experience had now to be utilised in consultation with the brethren. But still a work had to be done in Lycaonia and Pisidia if the results of his labours were not to be lost. He had quitted in great haste each town he had visited, forced out by persecution, and leaving the organisation of the Church incomplete. St. Paul came, like his Master, not merely to proclaim a doctrine: he came still more to found and organise a Divine society. He returns therefore back again along the route he had first taken. He does not preach in public, nor run any risks of raising riots anew. His work is now entirely of a

<sup>1</sup> The Romans had a local police in Asia Minor, organised after the manner of our own local police. The chief of the police in each town was called the eirenarch, and was annually appointed by the proconsul. The Romans never made the mistake of placing the police in the hands of discontented subjects. See, on this curious topic, Le Bas and Waddington's *Voyage Archéologique*, t. iii., pp. 27 and 255.

character interior to the Church. He strengthens the disciples by his teaching, he points out that earthly trials and persecutions are marks of God's love and favour rather than tokens of His wrath, he notes for them that it is needful "through many tribulations to enter into the kingdom of God," and above all he secures the permanence of his work by ordaining presbyters after the fashion of the Church at Antioch, with prayer and fasting and imposition of hands. This is one great typical lesson taught us here by St. Paul's return journey through Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch of Pisidia. Preaching and evangelistic work are important; but pastoral work and Church consolidation and Church order are equally important, if any permanent fruits are to be garnered and preserved. And the other typical lesson is implied in the few words wherein the termination of his first great missionary journey is narrated. "When they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia; and thence they sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been committed to the grace of God for the work which they had fulfilled."

Antioch was the centre whence Paul and Barnabas had issued forth to preach among the Gentiles, and to Antioch the apostles returned to cheer the Church with the narrative of their labours and successes, and to restore themselves and their exhausted powers with the sweetness of Christian fellowship, of brotherly love and kindness such as then flourished, as never before or since, amongst the children of men. Mission work such as St. Paul did on this great tour is very exhausting, and it can always be best performed from a great centre. Mission work, evangelistic work of any kind, if it is to be successful, makes terrible demands on man's whole nature, physical, mental, spiritual, and

bodily. The best restorative for that nature when so exhausted is conversation and intercourse with men of like minds, such as St. Paul found when, returning to Antioch, he cheered the hearts and encouraged the hopes of the Church by narrating the wonders he had seen done and the triumphs he had seen won through the power of the Holy Ghost.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It has often been argued that the gift of tongues conferred by the Holy Ghost at Pentecost was not necessary, as Greek was universally spoken in Asia Minor. The use of the Lycaonian tongue at Lystra, even though a Roman colony, is an important fact on the other side. Mr. Ramsay, in his *Hist. Geog. of Asia Minor*, says; "Greek was not the popular language of the plateau, even in the third century after Christ; the mass of the people spoke Lycaonian and Galatian and Phrygian, though those who wrote books wrote Greek and those who governed spoke Latin." Cf. pp. 98, 99 of Mr. Ramsay's work, and p. 103 of the previous volume of this commentary. This subject of the original languages of Asia Minor and their survival to Christian times is an interesting and novel subject of study, for which materials are gradually accumulating. Thus the ancient Cappadocian language is discussed and a lexicon of it compiled in a monograph which appeared in the *Museum* of the Evangelical school at Smyrna (1880-84), pp. 47--265. A large number of inscriptions in the Phrygian language have also been recovered. St. Paul, addressing the natives of the central plateau of Asia Minor in Greek, would have been like an Englishman preaching to the inhabitants of Wales or of Connemara in English. I never heard of any powerful results thus following, save in the case of Giraldus Cambrensis who tells us in his *Itinerary in Wales* of the melting character of his own Latin, sermons upon the Welsh people, though they did not understand a word of them. But then Giraldus was, to say the least, an imaginative historian.



## CHAPTER X.

### *THE FIRST CHRISTIAN COUNCIL.*

“And certain men came down from Judæa and taught the brethren, saying, Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved. And when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and questioning with them, the brethren appointed that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. . . . And the apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider of this matter.” . . . James said, “My judgment is, that we trouble not them which from among the Gentiles turn to God.”—ACTS xv, 1, 2, 6, 19.

I HAVE headed this chapter, which treats of Acts xv. and its incidents, the First Christian Council, and that of set purpose and following eminent ecclesiastical example. People often hear the canons of the great Councils quoted, the canons of Nice, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon, those great assemblies which threshed out the controversies concerning the person and nature of Jesus Christ and determined with marvellous precision the methods of expressing the true doctrine on these points, and they wonder where or how such ancient documents have been preserved. Well, the answer is simple enough. If any reader, curious about the doings of these ancient assemblies, desires to study the decrees which proceeded from them, and even the debates which occurred in them, he need only ask in any great library for a history of the Councils, edited either by Hardouin or Labbe and

Cossart, or, best and latest of all, by Mansi. They are not externally very attractive volumes, being vast folios; nor are they light or interesting reading. The industrious student will learn much from them, however; and he will find that they all begin the history of the Christian Councils by placing at the very head and forefront thereof the history and acts of the Council of Jerusalem held about the year 48 or 49 A.D., wherein we find a typical example of a Church synod which set a fashion perpetuated throughout the ages in councils, conferences, and congresses down to the present time. Let us inquire then into the origin, the procedure, and the results of this Assembly, sure that a council conducted under such auspices, reported by such a divinely guided historian, and dealing with such burning questions, must have important lessons for the Church of every age.<sup>1</sup>

I. The question, however, naturally meets us at the very threshold of our inquiry as to the date of this assembly, and the position which it holds in the process of development through which the Christian Church was passing. The decision of this Synod at Jerusalem did not finally settle the questions about the law and its obligatory character. The relations between the Jewish and Gentile sections of the Church continued in some places, especially in the East, more or less unsettled well into the second century; for the Jews found it very hard indeed to surrender all their cherished

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<sup>1</sup> Mansi, A.D. 1692—1769, was Archbishop of Lucca. He was a very learned man. Besides valuable editions of other men's works he published his *Sanctorum Conciliorum Collectio* in thirty-one vols. folio, Florence and Venice, 1759-98. Mansi fixes the date of the Jerusalem Synod either to 49 or 51 A.D. He counts it the third synod, regarding as the first synod that held for the election of Matthias, and as the second that assembled for the choice of the deacons.

privileges and ancient national distinctions. But the decree of the Jerusalem Assembly, though only a partial settlement, "mere articles of peace," as it has been well called, to tide over a pressing local controversy, formed in St. Paul's hands a powerful weapon whereby the freedom, the unity, and the catholicity of the Church was finally achieved. Where, then, do we locate this Synod in the story of St. Paul's labours?

The narrative of the Acts clearly enough places it between the first and the second missionary tours in Asia Minor undertaken by that apostle. Paul and Barnabas laboured for the first time in Asia Minor probably from the autumn of 44 till the spring or summer of 46. Their work at that time must have extended over at least eighteen months or more. Their journeys on foot must alone have taken up no small time. They traversed from Perga, where they landed, to Derbe, whence they turned back upon their work, a space of at least two hundred and fifty miles. They made lengthened sojourns in large cities like Antioch and Iconium. They doubtless visited other places of which we are told nothing. Then, having completed their aggressive work, they retraced their steps along the same route, and began their work of consolidation and Church organisation, which must have occupied on their return journey almost as much, if not more, time that they had spent in aggressive labour upon their earlier journey. When we consider all this, and strive to realise the conditions of life and travel in Asia Minor at that time, eighteen months will not appear too long for the work which the apostles actually performed. After their return to Antioch they took up their abode in that city for a considerable period. "They tarried no little time with the disciples" are the exact words

of St. Luke telling of their stay at Antioch. Then comes the tale of Jewish intrigues and insinuations, followed by debates, strife, and oppositions concerning the universally binding character of the Jewish law, terminating with the formal deputation from Antioch to Jerusalem. These latter events at Antioch may have happened in a few weeks or months, or they may have extended over a couple of years. But then, on the other hand, we note that St. Paul's second missionary journey began soon after the Synod of Jerusalem. That journey was very lengthened. It led St. Paul right through Asia Minor, and thence into Europe, where he must have made a stay of at least two years. He was at Corinth for eighteen months when Gallio arrived as proconsul about the middle of the year 53, and previously to that he had worked his way through Macedonia and Greece. St. Paul on his second tour must have been then at least four years absent from Antioch, which he must therefore have left about the year 49 or 50. The Synod of Jerusalem must therefore be assigned to the year 48 A.D. or thereabouts; or, in other words, not quite twenty years after the Crucifixion.

II. And now this leads us to consider the occasion of the Synod. The time was not, as we have said, quite twenty years after the Crucifixion, yet that brief space had been quite sufficient to raise questions undreamt of in earlier days. The Church was at first completely homogeneous, its members being all Jews; but the admission of the Gentiles and the action of St. Peter in the matter of Cornelius had destroyed this characteristic so dear to the Jewish heart. The Divine revelation at Joppa to St. Peter and the gift of the Holy Ghost to Cornelius had for a time quenched the opposition to the admission of the Gentiles to baptism; but, as

we have already said, the extreme Jewish party were only silenced for a time, they were not destroyed. They took up a new position. The case of Cornelius merely decided that a man might be baptized without having been *previously* circumcised; but it decided nothing in their opinion about the *subsequent* necessity for circumcision and admission into the ranks of the Jewish nation. Their view, in fact, was the same as of old. Salvation belonged exclusively to the Jewish nation, and therefore if the converted Gentiles were to be saved it must be by incorporation into that body to which salvation alone belonged. The strict Jewish section of the Church insisted the more upon this point, because they saw rising up in the Church of Antioch, and elsewhere among the Churches of Syria and Cilicia, a grave social danger threatening the existence of their nation as a separate people. There were just then two classes of disciples in these Churches. There were disciples who lived after the Jewish fashion,—abstaining from unlawful foods, using food slain by Jewish butchers, and scrupulous in washings and lustrations; and there were Gentiles who lived after the Gentile fashion, and in especial ate pork and things strangled. The strict Jews knew right well the tendency of a majority to swallow up a minority, specially when they were all members of the same religious community, enjoying the same privileges and partakers of the same hope. A majority does not indeed necessarily absorb a minority. Roman Catholicism is the religion of the majority in Ireland and France; yet it has not absorbed the small Protestant minority. The adherents of Judaism were scattered in St. Paul's day all over the world, yet Paganism had not swallowed them up. In these cases,

however, the minority have been completely separated from the majority by a middle wall, a barrier of rigid discipline, and of strong, yea, even violent religious repugnance. But the prospect now before the strict Jewish party was quite different. In the Syrian Church as they beheld it growing up Jew and Gentile would be closely linked together, professing the same faith, saying the same prayers, joining in the same sacraments, worshipping in the same buildings. All the advantages, too, would be on the side of the Gentile. He was freed from the troublesome restrictions—the more troublesome because so petty and minute—of the Levitical Law. He could eat what he liked, and join in social converse and general life without hesitation or fear. In a short time a Jewish disciple would come to ask himself, What do I gain by all these observances, this yoke of ordinances, which neither we nor our fathers have been able perfectly to bear? If a Gentile disciple can be saved without them, why should I trouble myself with them? The Jewish party saw clearly enough that toleration of the presence of the Gentiles in the Church and their admission to full communion and complete Christian privileges simply involved the certain overthrow of Jewish customs, Jewish privileges, and Jewish national expectations. They saw that it was a case of war to the death, one party or the other must conquer, and therefore in self-defence they raised the cry, “Unless the Gentile converts be circumcised after the manner of Moses they cannot be saved.”

Antioch was recognised at Jerusalem as the centre of Gentile Christianity. Certain, therefore, of the zealous, Judaising disciples of Jerusalem repaired to Antioch, joined the Church, and secretly proceeded to

organise opposition to the dominant practice, using for that purpose all the authority connected with the name of James the Lord's brother, who presided over the Mother Church of the Holy City.

Now let us see what position St. Paul took up with respect to these "false brethren privily brought in, who came in privily to spy out the liberty he enjoyed in Christ Jesus." Paul and Barnabas both set themselves undauntedly to fight against such teaching. They had seen and known the spiritual life which flourished free from all Jewish observances in the Church of the Gentiles. They had seen the gospel bringing forth the fruits of purity and faith, of joy and peace in the Holy Ghost; they knew that these things prepare the soul for the beatific vision of God, and confer a present salvation here below; and they could not tolerate the idea that a Jewish ceremony was necessary over and above the life which Christ confers if men are to gain final salvation.

Here, perhaps, is the proper place to set forth St. Paul's view of circumcision and of all external Jewish ordinances, as we gather it from a broad review of his writings. St. Paul vigorously opposed all those who taught the *necessity* of Jewish rites so far as salvation is concerned. This is evident from this chapter and from the Epistle to the Galatians. But, on the other hand, St. Paul had not the slightest objection to men observing the law and submitting to circumcision, if they only realised that these things were mere national customs and observed them as national customs, and even as religious rites, but not as *necessary* religious rites. If men took a right view of circumcision, St. Paul had not the slightest objection to it. It was not to circumcision St. Paul objected, but to



the extreme stress laid upon it, the intolerant views connected with it. Circumcision as a voluntary practice, an interesting historical relic of ancient ideas and customs, he never rejected,—nay, further, he even practised it, as we shall see in the case of Timothy; circumcision as a compulsory practice binding upon all men St. Paul utterly abhorred. We may, perhaps, draw an illustration from a modern Church in this respect. The Coptic and Abyssinian Churches retain the ancient Jewish practice of circumcision. These Churches date back to the earliest Christian times, and retain doubtless in this respect the practice of the primitive Christian Church. The Copts circumcise their children on the eighth day and before they are baptized; but they regard this rite as a mere national custom, and treat it as absolutely devoid of any religious meaning, significance, or necessity. St. Paul would have had no objection to circumcision in this aspect any more than he would have objected to a Turk for wearing a fez, or a Chinaman for wearing a pigtail, or a Hindoo for wearing a turban. National customs as such were things absolutely indifferent in his view. But if Turkish or Chinese Christians were to insist upon all men wearing their peculiar dress and observing their peculiar national customs as being things absolutely necessary to salvation, St. Paul, were he alive, would denounce and oppose them as vigorously as he did the Judaisers of his own day.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> We miss the true standpoint whence to judge St. Paul's conduct aright, when we think as people generally do that St. Paul opposed circumcision *per se*. He simply opposed it when connected with wrong ideas. The Judaising disciples viewed the Jewish nation as the covenant people to whom alone salvation belonged. St. Paul viewed the Church as the body to whom alone salvation belonged, admission to which was gained by baptism. If any Christian holding St. Paul's

This is the explanation of St. Paul's own conduct. Some have regarded him as at times inconsistent with his own principles with regard to the law of Moses. And yet if men will but look closer and think more deeply, they will see that St. Paul never violated the rules which he had imposed upon himself. He refused to circumcise Titus, for instance, because the Judaising party at Jerusalem were insisting upon the absolute necessity of circumcising the Gentiles if they were to be saved. Had St. Paul consented to the circumcision of Titus, he would have been yielding assent, or seeming to yield assent, to their contention (see Gal. ii. 3). He circumcised Timothy at Lystra because of the Jews in that neighbourhood; not indeed because they thought it necessary to salvation that an uncircumcised man should be so treated, but because they knew that his mother was a Jewess, and the principle of the Jewish law, and of the Roman law too, was that a man's nationality and status followed that of his mother, not that of his father, so that the son of a Jewess must be incorporated with Israel. Timothy

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view chose to add any private ceremony such as circumcision in order to gain admission into any human society, St. Paul would not have opposed him any more than, if he were now alive, he would have opposed or denounced a Christian man because he became a Freemason, or an Orangeman, or joined the Oddfellows, observing the special ceremonies appointed for admission. The nearest approach in later times to the position taken up by the strict Jewish party will be found in the history of mediæval monasticism. The Cistercians and subsequently the Mendicant Orders endeavoured to persuade every person that every one who wished to be saved must join their Orders and assume their peculiar dress. On this account Fitz Ralph, Archbishop of Armagh, and his friend Wickliffe denounced them most vigorously. I have given some amusing instances of the opposition to the Cistercians evoked two centuries earlier by similar claims in *Ireland and the Anglo-Norman Church*, p. 42.

was circumcised in obedience to national law and custom not upon any compromise of religious principle. St. Paul himself made a vow and cut off his hair and offered sacrifices in the Temple as being the national customs of a Jew. These were things in themselves utterly meaningless and indifferent ; but they pleased other people. They cost him a little time and trouble ; but they helped on the great work he had in hand, and tended to make his opponents more willing to listen to him. St. Paul, therefore, with his great large mind, willing to please others for their good to edification, gratified them by doing what they thought became a Jew with a true national spirit beating within his breast. Mere externals mattered nothing in St. Paul's estimation. He would wear any vestments, or take any position, or use any ceremony, esteeming them all things indifferent, provided only they conciliated human prejudices and cleared difficulties out of the way of the truth. But if men insisted upon them as things necessary, then he opposed with all his might. This is the golden thread which will rule our footsteps wandering amid the mazes of this earliest Christian controversy. It will amply vindicate St. Paul's consistency, and show that he never violated the principles he had laid down for his own guidance. Had the spirit of St. Paul animated the Church of succeeding ages, how many a controversy and division would have been thereby escaped !<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I have often noted what I consider an unfair use of this controversy and of St. Paul's position in it. Men in the heat of argument have represented the High Church, or rather the so-called Ritualists in the Church of England, as answering to the Judaisers of St. Paul's day. There seems to me, however, no parallel between them. The Judaisers contended for a certain ceremony as *necessary to salvation*. I never heard of any Ritualist who considered any of his dearest practices in

III. Now let us turn our attention to the actual history of the controversy and strife which raged at Antioch and Jerusalem, and endeavour to read the lessons the sacred narrative teaches. What a striking picture of early Church life is here presented! How full of teaching, of comfort, and of warning! How corrective of the false notions we are apt to cherish of the state of the primitive Church! There we behold the Church of Antioch rejoicing one day in the tidings of a gospel free to the world, and on the next day torn with dissension as to the points and qualifications necessary to salvation. For we must observe that the discussion started at Antioch touched no secondary question, and dealt with no mere point of ritual. It was a fundamental question which troubled the Church. And yet that Church had apostles and teachers abiding in it who could work miracles and speak with tongues, and who received from time to time direct revelations from heaven, and were endowed with the extraordinary presence of the Holy Ghost. Yet there it was that controversy with all its troubles raised its head, and "Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension" with their opponents. What a necessary warning for every age, and specially for our own, we behold in this narrative! Has not this sacred Book a message in

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this light. He may view them as lawful, as edifying, and very necessary for the instruction of the people; but I have never heard of their most extreme adherents contending for their necessity to salvation. It would be just as true to identify their opponents with the Judaisers, because they have insisted, and often with great vigour, upon the use of the black gown in the pulpit. I have known extreme men to take up the position that the gospel could not be preached where the black gown was not used. Any one who will take the trouble to read the *Life of Bishop Blomfield* of London, edited by his son, vol. ii., will see some striking illustrations of the extent to which such views were pushed half a century ago.

this passage specially applicable to our own time? A great Romeward movement has within the last seventy years, more powerful in the earlier portion of that period than in the latter, extended itself over Europe. English people think that they have themselves been the only persons who have experienced it. But this is a great mistake. Germany forty and fifty years ago felt it also to a large extent. And what was the great predisposing cause of that tendency? Men had simply become tired of the perpetual controversies which raged within the churches and communions outside the sway of Rome. They longed for the perpetual peace and rest which seemed to them to exist within the Papal domains, and they therefore flung themselves headlong into the arms of a Church which promised them relief from the exercise of that private judgment and personal responsibility which had become for them a crushing burden too heavy to be borne. And yet they forgot several things, the sudden discovery of which has sent many of these intellectual and spiritual cowards in various directions, some back to their original homes, some far away into the regions of scepticism and spiritual darkness. They forgot, for instance, to inquire how far the charmer who was alluring them from the land of their nativity by specious promises could satisfy the hopes she was raising. They hoped to get rid of dissension and controversy; but did they? When they had left their childhood's home and their father's house and sought the house of the stranger, did they find there halcyon peace? Nay, rather did they not find there as bitter strife, nay, far more bitter strife, on questions like the Immaculate Conception and Papal Infallibility than ever raged at home? Did they not find, and do they not find still, that no man and no

society can put a hook in the jaws of that Leviathan, the right of private judgment, which none can tame or restrain, and which asserts itself still in the Roman Communion as vigorously as ever even now when the decree of Papal infallibility has elevated that dogma into the rank of those necessary to salvation? Else whence come those dissensions and discussions between minimisers and maximisers of that decree? How is it that no two doctors or theologians will give precisely the same explanation of it, and that, as we in Ireland have seen, every curate fresh from Maynooth claims to be able to express his own private judgment and determination whether any special Papal decree or bull is binding or not?<sup>1</sup> This is one important point forgotten by those who have sought the Roman Communion because of its promises of freedom from controversy. They forgot to ask, Can these promises be fulfilled? And many of them, in the perpetual unrest and strife in which they have found themselves involved as much in their new home as in their old, have proved the specious hopes held out to be the veriest mirage of the Sahara desert. But this was not the only omission of which such persons were guilty. They forgot that, suppose the Roman Church could fulfil its promises and prove a religious home of perfect peace

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<sup>1</sup> The conduct of the Romish clergy in Ireland when the Papal rescripts were issued concerning the Parnell tribute, boycotting, and the Plan of the Campaign was an amusing commentary on their view of Papal Infallibility. Any one who will take the trouble to search the columns of the *Freeman's Journal* at that time will see how freely curates even criticised the Papal infallible utterances. One of them remarked to me at the time, "I think we have taught the old gentleman a lesson he will not forget," referring to the Papal rescripts. Infallibility is very good so long as it is with us, but when against us it becomes very fallible. Such is clearly the view of Irish Roman Catholics.



and freedom from diverging opinions, it would in that case have been very unlike the primitive Church. The Church of Antioch or of Jerusalem, enjoying the ministry of Peter and John and James and Paul,—these pillar-men, as St. Paul calls some of them,—was much more like the Church of England of fifty years ago than any society which offered perfect freedom from theological strife; for the Churches of ancient times in their earliest and purest days were swept by the winds of controversy and tossed by the tempests of intellectual and religious inquiry just like the Church of England, and they took exactly the same measures for the safety of the souls entrusted to them as she did. They depended upon the power of free debate, of unlimited discussion, of earnest prayer, of Christian charity to carry them on till they reached that haven of rest where every doubt and question shall be perfectly solved in the light of the unveiled vision of God.

Then, again, we learn another important lesson from a consideration of the persons who raised the trouble at Antioch. The opening words of the fifteenth chapter thus describes the authors of it: "Certain men came down from Judæa." It is just the same with the persons who a short time after compelled St. Peter to stagger in his course at the same Antioch: "When certain came from James, then St. Peter separated himself, fearing them of the circumcision" (Gal. ii. 12). Certain bigots, that is, of the Jewish party, came, pretending to teach with the authority of the Mother Church, and secretly disturbing weak minds. But they were only pretenders, as the apostolic Epistle expressly tells us: "Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls; . . . to whom we gave no



such commandment." These religious agitators, with their narrow views about life and ritual, displayed the characteristics of like-minded men ever since. They secretly crept into the Church. There was a want of manly honesty about them. Their pettiness of vision and of thought affected their whole nature, their entire conduct. They loved the by-ways of intrigue and fraud, and therefore they hesitated not to claim an authority which they had never received, invoking apostolic names on behalf of a doctrine which the apostles had never sanctioned. The characteristics thus displayed by these Judaisers have ever been seen in their legitimate descendants in every church and society, East and West alike. Narrowness of mind, pettiness and intolerance in thought, have ever brought their own penalty with them and have ever been connected with the same want of moral uprightness. The miserable conception, the wretched fragment of truth upon which such men seize, elevating it out of its due place and rank, seems to destroy their sense of proportion, and leads them to think it worth any lie which they may tell, any breach of Christian charity of which they may be guilty, any sacrifice of truth and honesty which they may make on behalf of their beloved idol. The Judaisers misrepresented religious truth, and in doing so they misrepresented themselves, and sacrificed the great interests of moral truth in order that they might gain their ends.

IV. The distractions and controversies of Antioch were overruled, however, by the Divine providence to the greater glory of God. As the Judaisers continually appealed to the authority of the Church at Jerusalem, the brethren at Antioch determined to send to that body and ask the opinion of the apostles and elders

upon this question. They therefore despatched "Paul and Barnabas and certain other of them," among whom was Titus, an uncircumcised Gentile convert, as a deputation to represent their own views. When they came to Jerusalem the Antiochene deputies held a series of private conferences with the leading men of Jerusalem. This we learn, not from the Acts of the Apostles, but from St. Paul's independent narrative in Galatians ii., identifying as we do the visit there recorded with the visit narrated in Acts xv.<sup>1</sup> St. Paul here exhibits all that tact and prudence we ever trace in his character. He did not depend solely upon his own authority, his reputation, his success. He felt within himself the conscious guidance of the Divine Spirit aiding and guiding a singularly clear and powerful mind. Yet he disdained no legitimate precaution. He knew that the presence and guidance of the Spirit does not absolve a man anxious for the truth from using all the means in his power to ensure its success. He recognised that the truth, though it must finally triumph, might be eclipsed or defeated for a time through man's neglect and carelessness; and therefore he engaged in a series of private conferences, explaining difficulties, conciliating the support, and gaining the assistance of the most influential members of the Church, including, of course, "James, Cephas, and John, who were reputed to be pillars."

Is there not something very modern in the glimpse thus given us of the negotiations and private meetings which preceded the formal meeting of the Apostolic Council? Some persons may think that the presence and power of the Holy Ghost must have superseded

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<sup>1</sup> The reader should consult what Mr. Findlay has written on this point in his *Galatians*, chs. vi. and vii., pp. 92-112.

all such human arrangements and forethought. But the simple testimony of the Bible dispels at once all such objections, and shows us that as the primitive Church was just like the modern Church, torn with dissension, swept with the winds and storms of controversy, so too the divinely guided and inspired leaders of the Church then took precisely the same human means to attain their ends and carry out their views of truth as now find place in the meetings of synods and convocations and parliaments of the present time. The presence of the Holy Ghost did not dispense with the necessity of human exertions in the days of the apostles; and surely we may, on the other hand, believe that similar human exertions in our time may be quite consonant with the presence of the Spirit in our modern assemblies, overruling and guiding human plans and intrigues to the honour of God and the blessing of man. After these private conferences the apostles and elders came together to consider the difficult subject laid before them. And now many questions rise up which we can only very briefly consider. The composition of this Synod is one important point. Who sat in it, and who debated there? It is quite clear, from the text of the Acts, as to the persons who were *present* at this Synod. The sixth verse says, "The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider of this matter"; the twelfth verse tells us that "all the multitude kept silence, and hearkened unto Barnabas and Paul rehearsing what signs and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them"; in the twenty-second verse we read, "Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole Church, to choose men out of their company, and to send them to Antioch"; while, finally, in the twenty-third verse we read the super-

scription of the final decree of the Council, which ran thus, "The apostles and the elder brethren unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia." It seems to me that any plain man reading these verses would come to the conclusion that the whole multitude, the great body of the Church in Jerusalem, were present and took part in this assembly.<sup>1</sup> A great battle indeed has raged round the words of the Authorized Version of the twenty-third verse, "The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles," which are otherwise rendered in the Revised Version. The presence or the absence of the "and" between elders and brethren has formed the battle-ground between two parties, the one upholding, the other opposing the right of the laity to take part in Church synods and councils.

Upon a broad review of the whole affair this Apostolic Assembly seems to me to have an important bearing upon this point. There are various views involved. Some persons think that none but bishops should take part in Church synods; others think that none but clergymen, spiritual persons, in the technical and legal sense of the word "spiritual," should enter these assemblies, specially when treating of questions touching doctrine and discipline.<sup>2</sup> Looking at the subject from

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<sup>1</sup> The fifth verse states that after Paul had rehearsed the wonders done among the Gentiles certain of the sect of the Pharisees rose up saying, "It is needful to circumcise them." Some maintain that this was in a missionary meeting before the Synod, but that this is no proof that such laymen, if they were laymen, were allowed to raise the question in the Synod. Of course the next verse states that "the apostles and elders" came together to consider this matter; but it also states that there was much questioning before St. Peter opened his mouth to speak on the subject. Surely the much questioning must have been on the part of the "certain of the sect of the Pharisees who believed"!

<sup>2</sup> It is a curious thing that three parties otherwise very much opposed

the standpoint of the Apostolic Council, we cannot agree with either party. We are certainly told of the speeches of four individuals merely—Paul, Barnabas, Peter, and James—to whom may be conceded the position of bishops, and even more. But, then, it is evident that the whole multitude of the Church was present at this Synod, and took an active part in it. We are expressly told (vv. 4 and 5): “When they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the Church and the apostles and the elders. . . . But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees who believed, saying, It is needful to circumcise them.” This indeed happened at the first meeting of the Church held to receive the Antiochene deputation when they arrived. But there does not seem to have been any difference between the constitution and authority of the first and second meetings. Both were what we should call Ecclesiastical Assemblies. Laymen joined in the discussions of the first, and doubtless laymen joined in the discussions and much questioning of the second.

There is not indeed a hint which would lead us to

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unite in this view: the extreme High Church party in England, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Wesleyan Conference, which latter body restrains all questions of doctrine and discipline to ministers alone as rigorously as either of the others. The Presbyterian Assemblies are in many respects open to the same charge, the elders who represent the laity being ordained by imposition of hands as truly as the ministers and signing the same doctrinal tests. I cannot say how far this may be true of the Established Assembly in Scotland, but as far as the Free Church and the Irish General Assemblies are concerned, I am bold to say that no unordained layman sits in them. I was much amused some time ago reading the charge of a Wesleyan President of Conference to the newly ordained ministers of the Irish Conference, when he bid them remember that Christ had entrusted to them alone the care of all questions touching doctrine and discipline. See for the High Anglican theory, which is just the same as the Wesleyan President's, Joyce's *Acts of the Church*, A.D. 1531—1885, p. 12.

conclude that the Pharisees, who rose up and argued on behalf of the binding character of the law of Moses, held any spiritual office whatsoever. So far as the sacred text puts it, they may have been laymen pure and simple, such as were the ordinary Pharisees. I cannot, indeed, see how any member of the Church of England can consistently maintain either from Holy Scripture, ancient ecclesiastical history, or the history of his own Church, that laymen are quite shut out from councils debating questions touching Christian faith, and that their consideration must be limited to bishops, or at least clergymen alone. The Apostolic Church seems to have admitted the freest discussion. The General Councils most certainly tolerated very considerable lay interference. The Emperor Constantine, though not even baptized, obtruded much of his presence and exercised much of his influence upon the great Nicene Council. Why even down to the sixteenth century, till the Tridentine Council, the ambassadors of the great Christian Powers of Europe sat in Church synods as representing the laity; and it was only in the Council of the Vatican, which met in 1870, that even the Roman Catholic Church formally denied the right of the people to exercise a certain influence in the determination of questions touching faith and discipline by the exclusion of the ambassadors who had in every previous council held a certain defined place. While again, when we come to the history of the Church of England, we find that the celebrated Hooker, the vindicator of its Church polity, expressly defended the royal supremacy as exercised within that Church on the ground that the king represented by delegation the vast body of the laity, who through him exercised a real influence upon all questions, whether



of doctrine or discipline. I feel a personal interest in this question, because one of the charges most freely hurled against the Church of Ireland is this, that she has admitted laymen to discussions and votes concerning such questions. I cannot see how consistently with her past history as an established Church she could have done otherwise. I cannot see how the Church of England, if she comes in the future to be disestablished, can do otherwise. That Church has always admitted a vast amount of lay interference, even prior to the Reformation, and still more since that important event. Extreme men may scoff at those branches of their own Communion which have admitted laymen to vote in Church synods upon all questions whatsoever; but they forget when doing so that statements and decrees most dear to themselves bear manifest traces of far more extreme lay intervention. The Ornaments Rubric, standing before the order for Morning Prayer, is a striking evidence of this. It is dear to the hearts of many, because it orders the use of eucharistic vestments and the preservation of the chancels in the ancient style; but on what grounds does it do so? Let the precise words of the rubric be the answer: "Here it is to be noted that such ornaments of the Church and of the ministers thereof, at all times of their ministration, shall be retained, and be in use, as were in this Church of England, *by the authority of Parliament*, in the second year of the reign of King Edward the Sixth." Objections to the determinations, rules, and canons of the Irish Church Synod might have some weight did they profess, as this rubric does, to have been ordained and imposed by the order of laymen alone. But when the bishops of a Church have an independent vote, the clergy an independent vote, the



free and independent vote of the laity is totally powerless by itself to introduce any novelty, and is only powerful to prevent change in the ancient order. I do not feel bound to defend some ill-judged expressions and foolish speeches which some lay representatives may have made in the Irish Church Synod as again no member of the Church of England need trouble himself to defend some rash speeches made in Parliament on Church topics. In the first moments of unaccustomed freedom Irish laymen did and said some rash things, and, overawing the clergy by their fierce expressions, may have caused the introduction of some hasty and ill-advised measures. But sure I am that every sincere member of the Church to which I belong will agree that the admission of the lay representatives to a free discussion and free vote upon every topic has had a marvellous influence in broadening their conceptions of Scripture truth and deepening their affections and attachment to their Mother Church which has treated and trusted them thus generously.<sup>1</sup>

V. The proceedings of the Apostolic Synod next demand our attention. The account which has been handed down is doubtless a mere outline of what actually happened. We are not told anything concerning the opening of the Assembly or how the discussion was begun. St. Luke was intent merely on setting forth the main gist of affairs, and therefore he reports but two speeches and tells of two others. Some Christian Pharisee having put forward his objections to the position occupied by the Gentile converts, St. Peter

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<sup>1</sup> I may perhaps be allowed to refer to a little tract of my own on this topic published at the time, on "The Work of the Laity in the Church of Ireland," as embodying the principles of Hooker applied to modern times and needs.

arose, as was natural, he having been the person through whose action the present discussion and trouble had originated. St. Peter's speech is marked on this occasion by the same want of assumption of any higher authority than belonged to his brethren which we have noted before when objections were taken to his dealings with Cornelius. His speech claims nothing for himself, does not even quote the Scriptures of the Old Testament, but simply repeats in a concise shape the story of the conversion of Cornelius, points out that God put no difference between Jew and Gentile, suggesting that if God had put no difference between them why should man dare to do so, and then ends with proclaiming the great doctrine of grace that men, whether Jews or Gentiles, are saved through faith in Christ alone, which purifies their hearts and lives. After Peter's speech there arose James the Lord's brother, who from ancient times has been regarded as the first bishop of Jerusalem, and who most certainly, from the various references to him both here and elsewhere in the Acts (chs. xii. 17, xxi. 18) and in the Epistle to the Galatians, seems to have occupied the supreme place in that Church. James was a striking figure. There is a long account of him left us by Hegesippus, a very ancient Church historian, who bordered on apostolic times, and now preserved for us in the *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius, ii., 23. There he is described as an ascetic and a Nazarite, like John the Baptist, from his earliest childhood. "He drank neither wine nor fermented liquors, and abstained from animal food. A razor never came upon his head, he never anointed with oil, and never used the bath. He alone was allowed to enter the sanctuary. He never wore woollen, but linen garments.

He was in the habit of entering the Temple alone, and was often found upon his bended knees, and interceding for the forgiveness of the people; so that his knees became as hard as camels', in consequence of his habitual supplication and kneeling before God. And indeed on account of his exceeding great piety he was called the Just and Oblias, which signifies the Rampart of the People." This description is the explanation of the power and authority of James the Just in the Apostolic Assembly. He was a strict legalist himself. He desired no freedom for his own share, but rejoiced in observances and restrictions far beyond the common lot of the Jews. When such a man pronounced against the attempt made to impose circumcision and the law as a necessary condition of salvation, the Judaisers must have felt that their cause was lost. St. James expressed his views in no uncertain terms. He begins by referring to St. Peter's speech and the conversion of Cornelius. He then proceeds to show how the prophets foretold the ingathering of the Gentiles, quoting a passage (Amos ix. 11, 12) which the Jewish expositors themselves applied to the Messiah. His method of Scriptural interpretation is exactly the same as that of St. Paul and St. Peter. It is very different from ours, but it was the universal method of his day; and when we wish to arrive at the meaning of the Scriptures, or for that matter of any work, we ought to strive and place ourselves at the standpoint and amid the circumstances of the writers and actors. The prophet Amos speaks of the tabernacle of David as fallen down. The rebuilding of it is then foretold, and James sees in the conversion of the Gentiles this predicted rebuilding. He then pronounces in the most decided language against "troubling those who from

among the Gentiles are turned to God" in the matter of legal observances, laying down at the same time the concessions which should be demanded from the Gentiles so as not to cause offence to their Jewish brethren. The sentence thus authoritatively pronounced by the strictest Jewish Christian was naturally adopted by the Apostolic Synod, and they wrote a letter to the disciples in Syria and Cilicia embodying their decision, which for a time settled the controversy which had been raised. This epistle begins by disclaiming utterly and at once the agitators who had gone forth to Antioch and had raised the disturbances. It declared that circumcision was unnecessary for the Gentile converts. This was the great point upon which St. Paul was most anxious. He had no objection, as we have already said, to the Jews observing their legal rites and ceremonies, but he was totally opposed to the Gentiles coming under any such rule as a thing necessary to salvation. The epistle then proceeds to lay down certain concessions which the Gentiles should in turn make. They should abstain from meats offered in sacrifice unto idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from fornication; all of them points upon which the public opinion of the Gentiles laid no stress, but which were most abhorrent to a true Jew. The decrees of the Synod of Jerusalem, as the inspired historian expressly terms them in ch. xvi. 4, were mere temporary expedients. They determined indeed one important question, that circumcision should not be imposed on the Gentiles—that Judaism, in fact, was not in and by itself a saving dispensation; but left unsolved many other questions, even touching this very subject of circumcision and the Jewish law, which had afterwards to be debated and threshed out, as St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians

proves. But, turning our eyes from the obsolete controversy which evoked the Apostolic Epistle, and viewing the subject from a wider and a modern standpoint, we may say that the decrees of this primitive Synod narrated in this typical history bestow their sanction upon the great principles of prudence, wisdom, and growth in the Divine life and in Church work. It was with the apostles themselves as with the Church ever since. Apostles even must not make haste, but must be contented to wait upon the developments of God's providence. Perfection is an excellent thing, but then perfection cannot be attained at once. Here a little and there a little is the Divine law under the New as under the Old Dispensation. Truth is the fairest and most excellent of all possessions, but the advocates of truth must not expect it to be grasped in all its bearings by all sorts and conditions of men at one and the same time. They must be content, as St. Paul was, if one step be taken at a time; if progress be in the right and not in the wrong direction; and must be willing to concede much to the feelings and long-descended prejudices of short-sighted human nature.

## CHAPTER XI.

### *APOSTOLIC QUARRELS AND THE SECOND TOUR.*

“And after some days Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us return now and visit the brethren in every city wherein we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they fare. . . . And there arose a sharp contention between them, so that they parted asunder one from the other.”—ACTS xv. 36, 39.

“And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden of the Holy Ghost to speak the word in Asia. . . . They came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There was a man of Macedonia standing, beseeching him, and saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us.”—ACTS xvi. 6, 8, 9.

THE second missionary tour of St. Paul now claims our attention, specially because it involves the first proclamation of Christianity by an apostle within the boundaries of Europe. The course of the narrative up to this will show that any Christian effort in Europe by an apostle, St. Peter or any one else prior to St. Paul's work, was almost impossible. To the Twelve and to men like-minded with them, it must have seemed a daring innovation to bring the gospel message directly to bear upon the masses of Gentile paganism. Men of conservative minds like the Twelve doubtless restrained their own efforts up to the time of St. Paul's second tour within the bounds of Israel according to the flesh in Palestine and the neighbouring lands, finding there an ample field upon which to exercise their diligence. And then when we turn to St. Paul

and St. Barnabas, who had dared to realise the freeness and fulness of the gospel message, we shall see that the Syrian Antioch and Syria itself and Asia Minor had hitherto afforded to them scope quite sufficient to engage their utmost attention. A few moments' reflection upon the circumstances of the primitive Christian Church and the developments through which Apostolic Christianity passed are quite sufficient to dispel all such fabulous incrustations upon the original record as those involved in St. Peter's episcopate at Antioch or his lengthened rule over the Church at Rome. If the latter story was to be accepted, St. Peter must have been Bishop of Rome long before a mission was despatched to the Gentiles from Antioch, if not even before the vision was seen at Joppa by St. Peter when the admission of the Gentiles to the Church was first authorised under any terms whatsoever.<sup>1</sup> In fact, it would be impossible to fit the actions of St. Peter into any scheme whatsoever, if we bring him to Rome and make him bishop there for twenty-five years beginning at the year 42, the time usually assigned by Roman Catholic historians. It is hard enough to frame a hypothetical scheme, which will find a due and fitting place for the various recorded actions of St. Peter,

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<sup>1</sup> St. Jerome places the beginning of St. Peter's twenty-five years' episcopate at Rome in A.D. 42—that is, two years before Herod's attempt to put St. Peter to death. This idea has been worked up into an elaborate story, which will be found duly set forth in great detail in Fleury's *Ecclesiastical History*, Book I., where St. Peter is made Bishop of Rome prior to the death of Herod Agrippa, whence he despatches disciples to found Churches in various towns of Italy, and whence he writes his first Epistle to the Jews of the Dispersion in Asia Minor. A simple statement of this is sufficient refutation for any one who knows the bare text of the Acts. There seems, however, no reason whatsoever to doubt the ancient tradition which fixes the martyrdom of



quite apart from any supposed Roman episcopate lasting over such an extended period. St. Peter and St. Paul had, for instance, a dispute at Antioch of which we read much in the second chapter of the Galatian Epistle. Where shall we fix that dispute? Some place it during the interval between the Synod at Jerusalem and the second missionary tour of which we now propose to treat. Others place it at the conclusion of that tour, when St. Paul was resting at Antioch for a little after the work of that second journey. As we are not writing the life of St. Paul, but simply commenting upon the narratives of his labours as told in the Acts, we must be content to refer to the Lives of St. Paul by Conybeare and Howson, and Archdeacon Farrar, and to Bishop Lightfoot's *Galatians*, all of whom place this quarrel before the second tour, and to Mr. Findlay's *Galatians* in our own series, who upholds the other view. Supposing, however, that we take the former view in deference to the weighty authorities just mentioned, we then find that there were two serious quarrels which must for a time have marred the unity and Christian concord of the Antiochene Church.

The reproof of St. Peter by St. Paul for his dissimu-

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St. Peter at Rome. See on the whole subject the interesting article on St. Peter in Schaff's *Encyclopædia of Theology*, p. 1814. In the *Acta Sanctorum*, published by the Bollandists, April, vol. iii., p. 346, we are told that St. Peter despatched St. Mark to found the Church of Aquileia, which claims the next rank to the Church of Rome among the Italian sees. In fact, the Bishops of Aquileia regarded themselves as of such importance, owing to their apostolic origin, that they headed a separation from the Church of Rome, which lasted from about A.D. 570 to 700. See Robertson's *History of the Church*, ii., p. 306, and the authorities there quoted, on this interesting anticipation of the Reformation in England.

lation was made on a public occasion before the whole Church. It must have caused considerable excitement and discussion, and raised much human feeling in Antioch. Barnabas too, the chosen friend and companion of St. Paul, was involved in the matter, and must have felt himself condemned in the strong language addressed to St. Peter. This may have caused for a time a certain amount of estrangement between the various parties. A close study of the Acts of the Apostles dispels at once the notion men would fain cherish, that the apostles and the early Christians lived just like angels without any trace of human passion or discord. The apostles had their differences and misunderstandings very like our own. Hot tempers and subsequent coolnesses arose, and produced evil results between men entrusted with the very highest offices, and paved the way, as quarrels always do, for fresh disturbances at some future time. So it was at Antioch, where the public reproof of St. Peter by St. Paul involved St. Barnabas, and may have left traces upon the gentle soul of the Son of Consolation which were not wholly eradicated by the time that a new source of trouble arose.

The ministry of St. Paul at Antioch was prolonged for some time after the Jerusalem Synod, and then the Holy Ghost again impelled him to return and visit all the Churches which he had founded in Cyprus and Asia Minor. He recognised the necessity for supervision, support, and guidance as far as the new converts were concerned. The seed might be from heaven and the work might be God's own, but still human effort must take its share and do its duty, or else the work may fail and the good seed never attain perfection. St. Paul therefore proposed to Barnabas a second joint

mission, intending to visit "the brethren in every city wherein they had proclaimed the word of the Lord." Barnabas desired to take with them his kinsman Mark, but Paul, remembering his weakness and defection on their previous journey, would have nothing to say to the young man. Then there arose a sharp contention between them, or, as the original expression is, there arose a paroxysm between the apostles, so that the loving Christian workers and friends of bygone years, "men who had hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," separated the one from the other, and worked from henceforth in widely different localities.

I. There are few portions of the Acts more fruitful in spiritual instruction, or teeming with more abundant lessons, or richer in application to present difficulties, than this very incident. Let us note a few of them. One thought, for instance, which occurs at once to any reflecting mind is this: what an extraordinary thing it is that two such holy and devoted men as Paul and Barnabas should have had a quarrel at all; and when they did quarrel, would it not have been far better to have hushed the matter up and never have let the world know anything at all about it? Now I do not say that it is well for Christian people always to proclaim aloud and tell the world at large all about the various unpleasant circumstances of their lives, their quarrels, their misunderstandings, their personal failings and backslidings. Life would be simply intolerable did we live always, at all times, and under all circumstances beneath the full glare of publicity. Personal quarrels too, family jars and bickerings have a rapid tendency to heal themselves, if kept in the gloom, the soft, toned, shaded light of retirement. They have an unhappy tendency to harden and perpetuate

themselves when dragged beneath the fierce light of public opinion and the outside world. Yet it is well for the Church at large that such a record has been left for us of the fact that the quarrel between Paul and Barnabas waxed so fierce that they departed the one from the other, to teach us what we are apt to forget, the true character of the apostles. Human nature is intensely inclined to idolatry. One idol may be knocked down, but as soon as it is displaced the heart straightway sets to work to erect another idol in its stead, and men have been ready to make idols of the apostles. They have been ready to imagine them supernatural characters, tainted with no sin, tempted by no passion, weakened by no infirmity. If these incidents had not been recorded—the quarrel with Peter and the quarrel with Barnabas—we should have been apt to forget that the apostles were men of like passions with ourselves, and thus to lose the full force—the bracing, stimulating force—of such exhortations as that delivered by St. Paul when he said to a primitive Church, “Follow me, as I, a poor, weak, failing, passionate man, have followed Christ.” We have the thorough humanity of the apostles vigorously presented and enforced in this passage. There is no suppression of weak points, no accentuation of strong points, no hiding of defects and weaknesses, no dwelling upon virtues and graces. We have the apostles presented at times vigorous, united, harmonious ; at other times weak, timorous, and cowardly.

Again, we note that this passage not only shows us the human frailties and weaknesses which marked the apostles, and found a place in characters and persons called to the very highest places ; it has also a lesson for the Church of all time in the circumstances which

led to the quarrel between Paul and Barnabas. We do well to mark carefully that Antioch saw two such quarrels, the one of which, as we have already pointed out, may have had something to say to the other. The quarrel between St. Paul and St. Peter indeed has a history which strikingly illustrates this tendency of which we have just now spoken. Some expositors, jealous of the good fame and reputation and temper of the apostles, have explained the quarrel at Antioch between St. Paul and St. Peter as not having been a real quarrel at all, but an edifying piece of acting, a dispute got up between the apostles to enforce and proclaim the freedom of the Gentiles, a mere piece of knavery and deception utterly foreign to such a truth-loving character as was St. Paul's.<sup>1</sup> It is interesting, however, to note as manifesting their natural characteristics, which were not destroyed, but merely elevated, purified, and sanctified by Divine grace, that the apostles Paul and Barnabas quarrelled about a purely personal matter. They had finished their first missionary tour on which they had been accompanied by St. Mark, who

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<sup>1</sup> "Origen started this theory that the dispute between Peter and Paul was simulated; in other words, being of one mind in the matter they got up this scene that St. Paul might the more effectually condemn the Judaisers through the chief of the apostles, who, acknowledging the justice of the rebuke, set them an example of submission. Thus he, in fact, substituted the much graver charge of dishonesty against both apostles in order to exculpate the one from the comparatively venial offence of moral cowardice and inconsistency. Nevertheless this view commended itself to a large number of subsequent writers, and for some time may be said to have reigned supreme." (Lightfoot's *Galatians*, p. 129.) St. Chrysostom and St. Jerome maintained the same view, while St. Augustine opposed it. The epistles exchanged between Jerome and Augustine on this topic are very interesting. They may be most easily perused in Augustine's *Epistles*, vol. i., pp. 131 and 280, as translated in T. & T. Clark's series (Edinburgh, 1872).

had acted as their attendant or servant, carrying, we may suppose, their luggage, and discharging all the subordinate offices such service might involve. The labour and toil and personal danger incident to such a career were too much for the young man. So with all the fickleness, the weakness, the want of strong definite purpose we often find in young people, he abandoned his work simply because it involved the exercise of a certain amount of self-sacrifice. And now, when Paul and Barnabas are setting out again, and Barnabas wishes to take the same favourite relative with them,<sup>1</sup> St. Paul naturally objects, and then the bitter passionate quarrel ensues. St. Paul just experienced here what we all must more or less experience, the crosses and trials of public life, if we wish to pass through that life with a good conscience. Public life, I say—and I mean thereby not political life, which alone we usually dignify by that name, but the ordinary life which every man and every woman amongst us must live as we go in and out and discharge our duties amid our fellow-men,—public life, the life we live once we leave our closet communion with God in the early morning till we return thereto in the eventide, is in all its departments most trying. It is trying to temper, and it is trying to principle, and no one can hope to pass through it without serious and grievous temptations. I do not wonder that men have often felt, as the old Eastern monks did, that salvation was more easily won

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<sup>1</sup> Mark is usually regarded as nephew to Barnabas. This opinion is grounded upon Col. iv. 10, as translated in the Authorised Version. They were, however, cousins merely. The Revised Version translates Col. iv. 10 thus: "Mark, the cousin of Barnabas." Dr. Lightfoot, in his *Colossians*, p. 236, has a long note showing that the word used about St. Mark in that passage is *ὁ ἀνεψιός*, which always means cousin german: see Thayer's edition of Grimm's *Lexicon of New Testament*, s.v.



in solitude than in living and working amid the busy haunts of men where bad temper and hot words so often conspire to make one return home from a hard day's work feeling miserable within on account of repeated falls and shortcomings. Shall we then act as they did? Shall we shut out the world completely and cease to take any part in a struggle which seems to tell so disastrously upon the equable calm of our spiritual life? Nay indeed, for such a course would be unworthy a soldier of the Cross, and very unlike the example shown by the blessed apostle St. Paul, who had to battle not only against others, but had also to battle against himself and his own passionate nature, and was crowned as a victor, not because he ran away, but because he conquered through the grace of Christ.

And now it is well that we should note the special trials he had to endure. He had to fight against the spirit of cowardly self-indulgence in others, and he had to fight against the spirit of jobbery. These things indeed caused the rupture in the apostolic friendship. St. Barnabas, apostle though he was, thought far more of the interests of his cousin than of the interests of Christ's mission. St. Paul with his devotion to Christ may have been a little intolerant of the weakness of youth, but he rightly judged that one who had proved untrustworthy before should not be rapidly and at once trusted again. And St. Paul was thoroughly right, and has left a very useful and practical example. Many young men among us are like St. Mark. The St. Marks of our own day are a very numerous class. They have no respect for their engagements. They will undertake work and allow themselves to be calculated upon, and arrangements to be made accordingly. But then comes the stress of action, and their place is found wanting,



and the work undertaken by them is found undone. And then they wonder and complain that their lives are unsuccessful, and that men and women who are in earnest will not trust or employ them in the future ! These are the men who are the social wrecks in life. They proclaim loudly in streets and highways the hard treatment which they have received. They tell forth their own misery, and speak as if they were the most deserving and at the same time the most ill-treated of men ; and yet they are but reaping as they have sown, and their failures and their misfortunes are only the due and fitting rewards of their want of earnestness, diligence, and self-denial. To the young this episode proclaims aloud : Respect your engagements, regard public employments as solemn contracts in God's sight. Take pains with your work. Be willing to endure any trouble for its sake. There is no such thing as genius in ordinary life. Genius has been well defined as an infinite capacity for taking pains. And thus avoid the miserable weakness of St. Mark, who fled from his work because it entailed trouble and self-denial on his part.

Then, again, we view St. Paul with admiration because he withstood the spirit of jobbery when it displayed itself even in a saint. Barnabas in plain language wished to perpetrate a job in favour of a member of his family, and St. Paul withstood him. And how often since has the same spirit thus displayed itself to the injury of God's cause ! Let us note how the case stood. St. Barnabas was a good pious man of very strong emotional feelings. But he allowed himself to be guided, as pious people often do, by their emotions, affections, prejudices, not by their reason and judgment. With such men when their

affections come into play jobbery is the most natural thing in the world. It is the very breath of their nostrils. It is the atmosphere in which they revel. Barnabas loved his cousin John Mark, with strong, powerful, absorbing love, and that emotion blinded Barnabas to Mark's faults, and led him on his behalf to quarrel with his firmer, wiser, and more vigorous friend. Jobbery is a vice peculiar to no age and to no profession. It flourishes in the most religious as in the most worldly circles. In religious circles it often takes the most sickening forms, when miserable, narrow selfishness assumes the garb and adopts the language of Christian piety. St. Paul's action proclaims to Christian men a very needful lesson. It says, in fact, Set your faces against jobbery of every kind. Regard power, influence, patronage as a sacred trust. Permit not fear, affection, or party spirit to blind your eyes or prejudice your judgment against real merit; so shall you be following in the footsteps of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, with his heroic championship of that which was righteous and true, and of One higher still, for thus you shall be following the Master's own example, whose highest praise was this: "He loved righteousness, and hated iniquity."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The sequel of this story as made known through the Epistles is most interesting. The quarrel between St. Paul and St. Barnabas was not a permanent one. Five years or so later, when writing the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians (ix. 6), St. Paul associates himself with Barnabas as if they were companions once again: "Or I only, and Barnabas, have we not a right to forbear working?" It is interesting too to trace the change that came in subsequent years over the relations between St. Paul and St. Mark as revealed by the Epistles. About the year 50 St. Paul treated Mark sternly, and that same sternness was most beneficial to the young man. It was just what his character wanted. Fifteen years passed over both their heads, and the scene was then very different. In Col. iv. 10, 11 Mark is commended

We have now bestowed a lengthened notice upon this quarrel, because it corrects a very mistaken notion about the apostles, and shows us how thoroughly natural and human, how very like our own, was the everyday life of the primitive Church. It takes away the false halo of infallibility and impeccability with which we are apt to invest the apostles, making us view them as real, fallible, weak, sinful men like ourselves,<sup>1</sup> and thereby exalts the power of that grace

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unto the Church of Colossæ as one of the few Jewish Christians who had been a comfort in his bonds to the prisoner of Jesus Christ ; while again, when on the point of his departure, in the 2nd Epistle to Timothy, iv. 11, the once weak disciple is most touchingly and lovingly remembered : "Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee : for he is useful to me for ministering." St. Mark, after being the cause of this quarrel, appears no more in the Acts. The traditions about him will be found collected in English in Nelson's *Fasts and Festivals*, under his Feast Day, April 25th ; or better still in Cave's *Lives of the Apostles*, pp. 217-23 (London, 1684) ; and in Latin in the *Acta Sanctorum*, Ed. Boll., April, iii., 344-58. Cave and the Bollandists give all the traditions about his foundation of the Church of Alexandria, the patriarchs of which still claim descent from him. Some historical writers have maintained, that they used to be ordained by the imposition of St. Mark's dead hand. This seems a mistake, however. Mr. Butler, in his *Coptic Churches of Egypt*, vol. ii., p. 311, says that the newly ordained Patriarch of Alexandria used to hold St. Mark's head in his hands during the celebration of Mass after his consecration. (See also COPTIC CHURCH in *Diet. Christ. Biog.*). Renaudot, a learned French writer, published a history of the Alexandrian Patriarchate in 1713, which industriously collects all the details of St. Mark's life true and imaginary alike. St. Mark's supposed body was carried to Venice from Alexandria about A.D. 1235.

<sup>1</sup> It is curious to note how widespread is this notion that the apostles always possessed supernatural powers in virtue of their office, enabling them, for instance, infallibly to read men's hearts and thoughts. In a letter in the *Church Times* for August 19th, 1892, from an eminent dignitary of the Church of England, I noticed an example of it. He was discussing a question with which I have nothing to say, and in doing so writes : "The commission given by our Lord to the apostles cannot

which made them so eminent in Christian character, so abundant in Christian labours. Let us now apply ourselves to trace the course of St. Paul's second tour.

The effect of the quarrel between the friends was that St. Paul took Silas and St. Barnabas took Mark, and they separated; the latter going to Cyprus, the native country of Barnabas, while Paul and Silas devoted themselves to Syria and Asia Minor and their Churches. The division between these holy men became thus doubly profitable to the Church of Christ. It is perpetually profitable, by way of warning and example, as we have just now shown; and then it became profitable because it led to two distinct missions being carried on, the one in the island of Cyprus, the other on the continent of Asia. The wrath of man is thus again overruled to the greater glory of God, and human weakness is made to promote the interests of the gospel. We read, too, "they parted asunder the one from the other." How very differently they acted from the manner in which modern Christians do! Their difference in opinion did not lead them to depart into exactly the same district, and there pursue a policy of opposition the one against the other. They sought

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be used in precisely the same sense by ourselves. The apostles' powers were miraculous. . . . They could tell whether the condition of the soul of the recipient of their gifts was right or the reverse in a manner not possible for us. . . . They could perceive and gauge faith in a way that is not our prerogative. . . . It is clear that the apostles could have perceived whether repentance and faith were genuine." I do not deny that God sometimes made such special revelations to them. But *quâ* apostles they had no such gift of discerning spirits, else why did Peter baptize Simon Magus, or St. Paul and Barnabas take Mark with them at all, or St. Paul tolerate Demas even for a moment, or why did he not indicate the "grievous wolves" who should ravage the Ephesian Church after his departure?

rather districts widely separated, where their social differences could have no effect upon the cause they both loved. How very differently modern Christians act, and how very disastrous the consequent results! How very scandalous, how very injurious to Christ's cause, when Christian missionaries of different communions appear warring one with another in face of the pagan world! Surely the world of paganism is wide enough and large enough to afford scope for the utmost efforts of all Christians without European Christendom exporting its divisions and quarrels to afford matter for mockery to scoffing idolaters! We have heard lately a great deal about the differences between Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries in Central Africa, terminating in war and bloodshed and in the most miserable recriminations threatening the peace and welfare of the nations of Europe. Surely there must have been an error of judgment somewhere or another in this case, and Africa must be ample enough to afford abundant room for the independent action of the largest bodies of missionaries without resorting to armed conflicts which recall the religious wars between the Roman Catholic and Protestant Cantons of Switzerland! With the subsequent labours of Barnabas we have nothing to do, as he now disappears from the Acts of the Apostles,<sup>1</sup> though it would appear from a reference by St. Paul—I Cor. ix. 6, "Or I only, and

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<sup>1</sup> Ecclesiastical history and tradition tell us more about Barnabas and Cyprus. They represent Barnabas as the Apostle of the Church of Cyprus. This idea played a prominent part in the fifth century. The ancient connection between Antioch and Cyprus was then kept up, and the patriarchs of Antioch wished to subject the Archbishop and Bishops of Cyprus to their rule. The Seventh Session of the Great Council of Ephesus, which dealt with the Nestorian controversy, was

Barnabas, have we not a right to forbear working?"—as if at that time four or five years after the quarrel they were again labouring together at Ephesus, where First Corinthians was written, or else why should Barnabas be mentioned in that connexion at all?

Let us now briefly indicate the course of St. Paul's labours during the next three years, as his second missionary tour must have extended over at least that space of time. St. Paul and his companion Silas left Antioch amid the prayers of the whole Church. Evidently the brethren viewed Paul's conduct with approbation, and accompanied him therefore with fervent supplications for success in his self-denying labours. He proceeded by land into Cilicia and Asia Minor, and wherever he went he delivered the apostolic decree in order that he might counteract the workings of the Judaisers. This decree served a twofold purpose. It relieved the minds of the Gentile brethren with respect

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engaged with this question of Cyprus. The session was held on July 31st, 431. The Cypriote bishops claimed that they had been free from the dominion of Antioch back to apostolic times, and the Council confirmed their freedom: see Mansi's *Councils*, iv., 1465—1470; Hefele's *Councils* (T. & T. Clark's translation), vol. ii., p. 72. Forty years later the same claim was advanced by the celebrated Peter the Fuller, Patriarch of Antioch, and resisted by Anthemius, Bishop of Salamis or Constantia. The bishops of Cyprus were again successful, owing to the timely discovery of the body of Barnabas lying in a tomb with a copy of the Gospel of St. Matthew upon his heart, which, according to the opinion of the times, settled the point in dispute: see Anthemius in the *Dict. Christ. Biog.*, vol. i., p. 118. Cave, in his *Apostolici, or Lives of the Fathers*, pp. 33-43, diligently collects every scrap of information about St. Barnabas. An early tradition found in the *Clementine Recognitions*, lib. i., cap. 7, and dating from about A.D. 200, makes him the first apostle to preach in Rome, preceding St. Peter himself, against which theory as trenching on St. Peter's prerogatives Cardinal Baronius disputes very vigorously in his *Annals*, A.D. 51, lii.-liv.; see also Dr. Salmon on Clementine Literature in the *Dict. Christ. Biog.*, i., 568.



to the law and its observances, and it also showed to them that the Jerusalem Church and apostles recognised the Divine authority and apostolate of St. Paul himself, which these "false brethren" from Jerusalem had already assailed, as they did four or five years later both in Galatia and at Corinth. We know not what special towns St. Paul visited in Cilicia, but we may be sure that the Church of Tarsus, his native place, where in the first fervour of his conversion he had already laboured for a considerable period, must have received a visit from him. We may be certain that his opponents would not leave such an important town unvisited, and we may be equally certain that St. Paul, who, as his Epistles show, was always keenly alive to the opinion of his converts with respect to his apostolic authority, would have been specially anxious to let his fellow townsmen at Tarsus see that he was no unauthorised or false teacher, but that the Jerusalem Church recognised his work and teaching in the amplest manner.

Starting then anew from Tarsus, Paul and Silas set out upon an enormous journey, penetrating, as few modern travellers even now do, from the south-eastern extremity of Asia Minor to the north-western coast, a journey which, with its necessarily prolonged delays, must have taken them at least a year and a half. St. Paul seems to have carefully availed himself of the Roman road system. We are merely given the very barest outline of the course which he pursued, but then when we take up the index maps of Asia Minor inserted in Ramsay's *Historical Geography of Asia Minor*, showing the road systems at various periods, we see that a great Roman road followed the very route which St. Paul took. It started from Tarsus and passed to Derbe,



whence of course the road to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch had already been traversed by St. Paul.<sup>1</sup> He must have made lengthened visits to all these places, as he had much to do and much to teach. He had to expound the decree of the Apostolic Council, to explain Christian truth, to correct the errors and abuses which were daily creeping in, and to enlarge the organisation of the Christian Church by fresh ordinations. Take the case of Timothy as an example of the trouble St. Paul must have experienced. He came to Derbe, where he first found some of the converts made on his earlier tour; whence he passed to Lystra, where he met Timothy, whose acquaintance he had doubtless made on his first journey. He was the son of a Jewess, though his father was a Gentile. St. Paul took and circumcised him to conciliate the Jews. The Apostle must have bestowed a great deal of trouble on this point alone, explaining to the Gentile portion of the Christian community the principles on which he acted and their perfect consistency with his own conduct at Jerusalem and his advocacy of Gentile freedom from the law. Then he ordained him. This we do not learn from the Acts, but from St. Paul's Epistles to Timothy. The Acts simply says of Timothy, "Him would Paul have to go forth with him." But then when we turn to the Epistles written to Timothy, we find that it was not as an ordinary companion that

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<sup>1</sup> The record of a very similar journey performed five years ago in July 1887 may be read in the *Journal of Hellenic Studies* for April 1890. Mr. D. G. Hogarth, who writes the story, travelled on that occasion from the borders of Galatia to the Cilician coast. His narrative gives a vivid picture of the scenery over the Taurus Range as St. Paul must have seen it on this second missionary tour, and of the difficulties by which he must have been surrounded. Cf. Ramsay's *Historical Geography of Asia Minor*, p. 362.

Timothy was taken. He went forth as St. Paul himself had gone forth from the Church of Antioch, a duly ordained and publicly recognised messenger of Christ. We can glean from St. Paul's letters to Timothy the order and ceremonies of this primitive ordination. The rite, as ministered on that occasion, embraced prophesyings or preachings by St. Paul himself and by others upon the serious character of the office then undertaken. This seems plainly intimated in 1 Tim. i. 18: "This charge I commit unto thee, my child Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee"; while there seems a reference to his own exhortations and directions in 2 Tim. ii. 2, where he writes, "The things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men." After this there was probably, as in modern ordinations, a searching examination of the candidate, with a solemn profession of faith on his part, to which St. Paul refers in 1 Tim. vi. 12, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on the life eternal, whereunto thou wast called, and *didst confess the good confession in the sight of many witnesses*. I charge thee in the sight of God who quickeneth all things, and of Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed the good confession; that thou keep the commandment, without spot, without reproach, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." And finally there came the imposition of hands, in which the local presbyters assisted St. Paul, though St. Paul was so far the guiding and ruling personage that, though in one place (1 Tim. iv. 14) he speaks of the gift of God which Timothy possessed, as given "by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery," in another place he describes it as given to the young evangelist by the imposition of St. Paul's own hands

(2 Tim. i. 6). This ordination of Timothy<sup>1</sup> and adoption of him as his special attendant stood at the very beginning of a prolonged tour throughout the central and northern districts of Asia Minor, of which we get only a mere hint in Acts xvi. 6-8: "They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden of the Holy Ghost to speak the word in Asia; and when they were come over against Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia; and the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not; and passing by Mysia, they came unto Troas." This is the brief sketch of St. Paul's labours through the north-western provinces of Asia Minor, during which he visited the district of Galatia and preached the gospel amid the various tribal communities of Celts who inhabited that district.

St. Paul's work in Galatia is specially interesting to ourselves. The Celtic race certainly furnished the groundwork of the population in England, Ireland, and Scotland, and finds to this day lineal representatives in the Celtic-speaking inhabitants of these three islands. Galatia was thoroughly Celtic in St. Paul's day. But how, it may be said, did the Gauls come there? We all know of the Gauls or Celts in Western Europe, and every person of even moderate education has

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<sup>1</sup> Cave has a long account of Timothy in his *Apostolici, or Lives of the Fathers*, pp. 45-53, where he gives an account of Timothy's martyrdom at Ephesus from Photius, the celebrated Greek scholar and patriarch of the ninth century: see Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 254, and the *Acta Sanctorum* for January, vol. ii., pp. 562-69. Timothy is said in the Martyrologies to have been buried on Mount Prion, a hill upon the side of which ancient Ephesus was built (see Wood's *Ephesus*, chap. i.), after he was cruelly put to death by the Ephesians enraged at his protest against one of their popular feasts. He suffered under Domitian about thirty years after St. Paul, and according to Photius was succeeded at Ephesus by St. John, who had been recalled from exile. His feast-day in the Calendar is January 24th.

heard of the Gauls who invaded Italy and sacked Rome when that city was yet an unknown factor in the world's history, and yet but very few know that the same wave of invasion which brought the Gauls to Rome led another division of them into Asia Minor, where—as Dr. Lightfoot shows in his Introduction to his Commentary—about three hundred years before St. Paul's day they settled down in the region called after them Galatia, perpetuating in that neighbourhood the tribal organisation, the language,<sup>1</sup> the national feelings, habits, and customs which have universally marked the Celtic race whether in ancient or in modern times. St. Paul on this second missionary tour paid his first visit to this district of Galatia. St. Paul usually directed his attention to great cities. Where vast masses of humanity were gathered together, there St. Paul loved to fling himself with all the mighty force of his unquenchable enthusiasm. But Galatia was

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<sup>1</sup> The provinces of Asia Minor all retained their ancient languages at the time of St. Paul. Latin and Greek were the language of society, but the mass of the people all spoke the original language of the country. In the time of St. Jerome, four centuries after St. Paul, Celtic was still spoken in Galatia as well as in Gaul. St. Paul must then have heard a language identical with that of Wales and the western districts of Ireland and Scotland, as is shown by Bishop Lightfoot in his *Galatians*, pp. 240-44, by his analysis of the remains of the Galatian language which ancient writers have handed down to us. Texier, a modern French traveller, thought that he could even trace Celtic features in the present inhabitants of the district. Cf. Lightfoot's *Galatians*, p. 12. It is very probable that a careful study of the existing language of Galatia, when treated according to the methods of modern scientific philology, would disclose Celtic elements. When Celtic elements survived in England and France, it is not likely they died out in Galatia. We know at any rate that the other original languages of Asia Minor have not perished without leaving some traces behind. There is a learned Review published at Smyrna from time to time. It is called the *Museum of the Evangelical School of Smyrna*. In the

quite unlike other districts with which he had dealt in this special respect. Like the Celtic race all the world over, the Gauls of Galatia specially delighted in village communities. They did not care for the society and tone of great towns, and Galatia was wanting in such. St. Paul, too, does not seem originally to have intended to labour amongst the Galatians at all. In view of his great design to preach in large cities, and concentrate his efforts where they could most effectually tell upon the masses, he seems to have been hurrying through Galatia when God laid His heavy hand upon the Apostle and delayed his course that we might be able to see how the gospel could tell upon Gauls and Celts even as upon other nations. This interesting circumstance is made known to us by St. Paul himself in the Epistle to the Galatians, iv. 13: "Ye know that because of an infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you for the first time." Paul, to put it

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volume published for 1880-84 there is an article of more than 200 pages treating of the ancient Cappadocian and Lycaonian dialects, and the traces of them which remain. On p. 71 there is a notice of the accuracy with which Acts xiv. 11 mentions the speech or dialect of the men of Lystra, which Mr. Hogarth, in the article in the *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, April 1890, p. 157, to which we have already referred, identifies with the Phrygian dialect spoken till the sixth century of our era. Mr. Hogarth copied several inscriptions in this ancient Lycaonian or Phrygian speech. See also an English article by Professor W. M. Ramsay in Kühn's *Journal of Comparative Philology* for 1887, where he treats of this Lycaonian speech, and avows his belief (p. 382) that Græco-Roman civilisation and language did not begin to affect the rural parts of Northern and Eastern Phrygia till A.D. 100, long after St. Paul's day. The mass of the people spoke nothing but the original Phrygian. The reader who wishes to investigate what I consider the bearing of this subject on the gift of tongues should consult another article in English by Professor Ramsay, styled *Laodicea Combusta*, in the Transactions of the German Archæological Institute, vol. xiii., p. 248 (Athens, 1888).

in plain language, fell sick in Galatia.<sup>1</sup> He was delayed on his journey by the ophthalmia or some other form of disease, which was his thorn in the flesh, and then, utilising the compulsory delay, and turning every moment to advantage, he evangelised the village communities of Galatia with which he came in contact, so that his Epistle is directed, not as in other cases to the Church of a city or to an individual man, but the Epistle in which he deals with great fundamental questions of Christian freedom is addressed to the Churches of Galatia, a vast district of country. Mere accident, as it would seem to the eye of sense, produced the Epistle to the Galatians, which shows us the peculiar weakness and the peculiar strength of the Celtic race, their enthusiasm, their genuine warmth, their fickleness, their love for that which is striking, showy, material, exterior.<sup>2</sup> But when we pass from Galatia we know nothing of the course of St. Paul's further labours in Asia Minor. St. Luke was not with him during this portion of his work, and so the details given us are very few. We are told that "the Spirit of Jesus" would not permit him to preach in Bithynia, though Bithynia became afterwards rich in Christian Churches, and was one of the districts to which St. Peter some years later addressed his first Epistle.<sup>3</sup> The Jews were numerous

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<sup>1</sup> See Lightfoot's *Galatians*, pp. 22 and 172.

<sup>2</sup> Those who have access to great libraries will see a good description of Galatia accompanied with splendid plates in Texier's *Description de l'Asie*, in 3 vols. folio, published at Paris between 1839 and 1849. Mr. Lewin has reproduced some of the pictures in his *Life of St. Paul*.

<sup>3</sup> We owe one of the earliest glimpses of the Christian Church after apostolic days to this same province of Bithynia. Pliny went there as proconsul about 110 A.D. He found the whole country covered with Christians, and the Church organised, with deaconesses even, as in Greece and Ephesus. See the first volume of this commentary, p. 274.



in the districts of Bithynia and Asia, and "the Spirit of Jesus" or "the Holy Ghost"—for the sacred writer seems to use the terms as equivalent the one to the other—had determined to utilise St. Paul in working directly among the Gentiles, reserving the preaching of the gospel to the Dispersion, as the scattered Jews were called, to St. Peter and his friends. It is thus we would explain the restraint exercised upon St. Paul on this occasion. Divine providence had cut out his great work in Europe, and was impelling him westward even when he desired to tarry in Asia. How the Spirit exercised this restraint or communicated His will we know not. St. Paul lived, however, in an atmosphere of Divine communion. He cultivated perpetually a sense of the Divine presence, and those who do so, experience a guidance of which the outer world knows nothing. Bishop Jeremy Taylor, in one of his marvellous spiritual discourses called the *Via Intelligentiæ*, or The Way of Knowledge, speaks much on this subject, pointing out that they who live closest to God have a knowledge and a love peculiar to themselves.<sup>1</sup> And surely every

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The picture of the saintly slave deaconesses tortured for their faith within ten years of St. John's death is an interesting confirmation of the faith. It would be instructive to trace back the connexion of the second-century martyrs who have been well authenticated, with the Churches founded by the apostles. Justin Martyr suffered, for instance, at Rome about A.D. 165. With him there died Hierax, who had been born of Christian parents at Iconium. His grandfather might have been converted by St. Paul. In his examination he dwells upon the fact that he had been born of believing parents. See Ruinart's *Acta Sincera*, p. 44, a translation of which passage will be found in the works of Justin Martyr, in Clark's Series of Ante-Nicene Writers.

<sup>1</sup> See this sermon in Taylor's works, vol. viii., Ed. C. P. Eden (London, 1850). On p. 380 we find the following eloquent and profound passage bearing on this point: "Lastly there is a sort of God's dear servants who walk in perfectness, who perfect holiness in the fear of God, and



sincere and earnest follower of Christ has experienced somewhat of the same mystical blessings ! God's truest servants commit their lives and their actions in devout prayer to the guidance of their heavenly Father, and then when they look back over the past they see how marvellously they have been restrained from courses which would have been fraught with evil, how strangely they have been led by ways which have been full of mercy and goodness and blessing. Thus it was that St. Paul was at length led down to the ancient city of Troas, where God revealed to him in a new fashion his ordained field of labour. A man of Macedonia appeared in a night vision inviting him over to Europe, and saying, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us." Troas was a very fitting place in which this vision should appear. Of old time and in days of classic fable Troas had been the meeting-place where, as Homer and as Virgil tell, Europe and Asia had met in stern conflict, and where Europe as represented by Greece had come off victorious, bringing home the spoils which human nature counted most precious. Europe and Asia again meet at Troas; but no longer in carnal con-

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they have a degree of charity and divine knowledge more than we can discourse of, and more certain than the demonstrations of geometry, brighter than the sun and indeficient as the light of heaven. This is called by the Apostle the *ἀπαύγασμα τοῦ θεοῦ*. Christ is this 'brightness of God' manifested in the hearts of His dearest servants. But I shall say no more of this at this time, for this is to be felt and not to be talked of; and they that have never touched it with their finger, may secretly perhaps laugh at it in their heart, and be never the wiser. All that I have now to say of it is, that a good man is united unto God, *κέντρον κέντρῳ συνάψας*, as a flame touches a flame and combines into splendour and glory; so is the spirit of a man united unto Christ by the Spirit of God. These are the friends of God, and they best know God's mind, and they only that are so know how much such men do know. They have a special unction from above."

flict or in deadly fight. The interests of Europe and of Asia again touch one another, and Europe again carries off from the same spot spoil more precious far than Grecian poet ever dreamt of, for "when Paul had seen the vision, straightway we sought to go forth into Macedonia, concluding that God called us for to preach the gospel unto them." Whereupon we notice two points and offer just two observations. The vision created an enthusiasm, and that enthusiasm was contagious. The vision was seen by Paul alone, but was communicated by St. Paul unto Silas and to St. Luke, who now had joined to lend perhaps the assistance of his medical knowledge to the afflicted and suffering Apostle. Enthusiasm is a marvellous power, and endows a man with wondrous force. St. Paul was boiling over with enthusiasm, but he could not always impart it. The two non-apostolic Evangelists are marked contrasts as brought before us in this history. St. Paul was enthusiastic on his first tour, but that enthusiasm was not communicated to St. Mark. He turned back from the hardships and dangers of the work in Asia Minor. St. Paul was boiling over again with enthusiasm for the new work in Europe. He has now with him in St. Luke a congenial soul who, when he hears the vision, gathers at once its import, joyfully anticipates the work, and "straightway sought to go forth into Macedonia." Enthusiasm in any kind of work is a great assistance, and nothing great or successful is done without it. But above all in Divine work, in the work of preaching the gospel, the man devoid of enthusiasm begotten of living communion with God such as St. Paul and St. Luke enjoyed is sure to be a lamentable and complete failure.

Then again, and lastly, we note the slow progress of

the gospel as shown to us by this incident at Troas. Here we are a good twenty years after the Crucifixion, and yet the chief ministers and leaders of the Church had not yet crossed into Europe. There were sporadic Churches here and there. At Rome and at possibly a few Italian seaports, whence intercourse with Palestine was frequent, there were small Christian communities ; but Macedonia and Greece were absolutely untouched up to the present. We are very apt to overrate the progress of the gospel during those first days of the Church's earliest Church life. We are inclined to view the history of the Church of the first three centuries all on an heap as it were. We have much need to distinguish century from century and decennium from decennium. The first ten years of the Church's history saw the gospel preached in Jerusalem and Palestine, but not much farther. The second decennium saw it proclaimed to Asia Minor ; but it is only when the third decennium is opening that Christ despatches a formal mission to that Europe where the greatest triumphs of the gospel were afterwards to be won. Ignorance and prejudice and narrow views had been allowed to hinder the progress of the gospel then, as they are hindering the progress of the gospel still ; and an express record of this has been handed down to us in this typical history in order that if we too suffer the same we may not be astonished as if some strange thing had happened, but may understand that we are bearing the same burden and enduring the same trials as the New Testament saints have borne before us.

## CHAPTER XII.

### *ST. PAUL IN MACEDONIA.*

“The jailor called for lights, and sprang in, and, trembling for fear, fell down before Paul and Silas, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house”—ACTS xvi. 29-31.

“When they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: and Paul, as his custom was, went in unto them, and for three Sabbath days reasoned with them from the Scriptures, . . . And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night into Bercea: who when they were come thither went into the synagogue of the Jews.”—ACTS xvii. 1, 2, 10.

TROAS was at this time the termination of St. Paul's Asiatic travels. He had passed diagonally right through Asia Minor, following the great Roman roads which determined his line of march. From Troas he proceeded to Philippi, and for exactly the same reason. All the great roads formed under the emperors down to the time of Constantine the Great led to Rome. When the seat of empire was moved to Constantinople, all the Asiatic roads converged upon that city; but in St. Paul's day Rome was the world's centre of attraction, and thither the highways all tended. This fact explains St. Paul's movements. The Egnatian Road was one of the great channels of communication established for State purposes by Rome, and this road ran from Neapolis, where St. Paul landed, through Philippi on

to Dyrrachium, a port on the Adriatic, whence the traveller took ship to Brundisium, the modern Brindisi, and thence reached Rome. What a striking commentary we find in this simple fact upon the words of St. Paul in Galatians iv. 4: "When the fulness of the time came God sent forth His Son." Roman dominion involved much suffering and war and bloodshed, but it secured the network of communication, the internal peace, and the steady, regular government which now covered Europe as well as Asia, and thus for the first time in the world's history rendered the diffusion of the gospel possible, as St. Paul's example here shows. The voyage from Troas to Neapolis was taken by the Apostle after the usual fashion of the time.<sup>1</sup> Neapolis was the port of Philippi, whence it is distant some eight miles. Travellers from the East to Rome always landed there, and then took the Egnatian Road which started from Neapolis. If they were official persons they could use the public postal service, post-houses being established at a distance of six miles from one another, where relays of horses were kept at the public expense, to carry persons travelling on the imperial service.<sup>2</sup> Paul and Silas, Timothy and

<sup>1</sup> Both Lewin and Conybeare and Howson in their *Lives of St. Paul* enter into great details about the scenery and other circumstances of St. Paul's voyage from Troas to Neapolis, which would be out of place in this commentary, even if space did allow their insertion. Mr. Lewin's account is specially interesting, as he gives the impressions made upon himself when going over the ground. These writers all point out that St. Paul must have travelled with a fair wind; Conybeare and Howson even try to determine its exact direction, which they maintain was from the southward. Otherwise he could not have made the passage in two days, or followed the course actually taken. On a subsequent occasion (Acts xx. 6) St. Paul took five days in sailing from Philippi to Troas.

<sup>2</sup> Posts for the conveyance of intelligence were established by

Luke, must, however, have travelled on foot along the Egnatian Road from Neapolis to Philippi, which was their first objective point, according to St. Paul's usual policy, of attacking large and important centres of population, and then leaving the sacred leaven to work out into the surrounding mass of paganism. Philippi amply rewarded the wisdom of his plan, and the Philippian Church became notable for its zeal, its faith, its activity, among the Churches which owed their origin to the Apostle, as we learn from the Epistles addressed to the Corinthians and to the Philippians themselves a short time after the foundation of the Philippian Church.

Now let us look at the circumstances under which that foundation was laid. To understand them we must go back upon the course of history. Philippi was a city built by King Philip, the father of Alexander the Great. After the conquest of Macedonia by the Romans, it became famous as the scene of the great battle between Brutus and Cassius on the one hand,

Augustus (see Suetonius, *Aug.*, 49). Gibbon, in the second chapter of his *History*, has much information on this point. The reader curious in such matters will find a learned account of the Roman postal service in Godefroy's *Commentary on the Theodosian Code*, vol. ii., p. 526, where he traces the system down from Augustus to the year 400 A.D. It was somewhat similar to that which now prevails in Russia. An interesting story is told concerning Constantine the Great, which illustrates the system. During the Diocletian persecution Constantine, whose leanings towards Christianity were suspected, was residing in Asia Minor with the Emperor Galerius, the determined enemy of Christianity. Constantine knew that there was a plot against him, so, having obtained the authority necessary to use the post, he fled secretly one night, and as he rode along took fresh horses, and at the same time brought the tired animals with him. When his enemies followed him next day, they found the post stables empty, and their prey escaped without any possibility of pursuit. See *Dict. Christ. Biog.*, vol. i., p. 526, Art. Constantinus I., and De Broglie, *L'Église et L'Empire*, vol. i., p. 192.

and Mark Antony and Augustus on the other, which decided the fate of the empire and influenced the course of the world's history as few other battles have done. At the time of St. Paul's visit the memory of that battle was fresh, and the outward and visible signs thereof were to be seen on every side, as indeed some of them are still to be seen, the triumphal arches, for instance, erected in memory of the victory and the mound or rampart of earth raised by Brutus to hinder the advance of the opposing forces.<sup>1</sup> But these things had for the holy travellers a very slight interest, as their hearts were set upon a mightier conflict and a nobler war far than any ever before waged upon earth's surface. There is no mention made in the sacred narrative of the memories connected with the place, and yet St. Luke, as an honest writer setting down facts of which he had formed an important part, lets slip some expressions which involve and throw us back upon the history of the place for an explanation, showing how impossible it is to grasp the full force and meaning of the sacred writers unless we strive to read the Bible with the eyes of the people who lived at the time and for whom it was written. St. Luke calls Philippi "a city of Macedonia, the first of the district, a colony." Now this means that in that time it was situated in the Roman province of Macedonia, that it was either the capital of the division of Macedonia, in which it was situated, Macedonia being subdivided into four distinct divisions which were kept perfectly separate, or else that it was the

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<sup>1</sup> The remains of this rampart still exist. They are described in the *Mission Archéologique de Macédoine*, p. 103, carried out under the direction of M. Leon Heuzey, by order of Napoleon III., and published at Paris between 1864 and 1876.



first city the traveller met upon entering Macedonia from Asia, and further that it was a Roman colony, and thus possessed peculiar privileges. When we read in the Bible of colonies we must not understand the word in our modern sense. Colonies were then simply transcripts of the original city whence they had come. Roman colonies were miniatures or copies of Rome itself transplanted into the provinces, and ruling as such amid the conquered races where they were placed. They served a twofold purpose. They acted as garrisons to restrain the turbulence of the neighbouring tribes ; and if we study Roman geography carefully we shall find that they were always placed in neighbourhoods where their military importance is plainly manifest ; and further still, they were used as convenient places to locate the veteran soldiers of Italy who had served their time, where they were rewarded with grants of land, and were utilising at the same time the skill and experience in military matters which they had gained, for the general benefit of the State.

Augustus made Philippi into a colony, erecting a triumphal arch to celebrate his victory over Brutus, and placing there a large settlement of his veterans who secured for him this important outpost. The colonies which were thus dispersed along the military frontier, as we should put it in modern language, were specially privileged. All the settlers were Roman citizens, and the government of the colony was like that of the mother city itself, in the hands of two magistrates, called in Greek Strategoi, or in Latin Prætors,<sup>1</sup> who ruled

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<sup>1</sup> The proper official title of the highest magistrates of a colony was Duumviri. The colonies where a Greek spirit prevailed did not like this title, and called themselves Prætors, or Στρατηγοί, as in the case of Philippi. In exact accordance with St. Luke's usage Cicero, a century

according to the laws of the Twelve Tables and after Roman methods, though perhaps all the neighbouring cities were still using their ancient laws and customs handed down from times long prior to the Roman Conquest. The details given us by St. Luke are in the strictest accordance in all these respects with the facts which we know independently concerning the history and political status of Philippi.

St. Paul and his companions arrived in Philippi in the early part of the week. He was by this time a thoroughly experienced traveller. Five years later, when writing his Second Epistle to Corinth, he tells us that he had been already three times shipwrecked; so that, unless peculiarly unfortunate, he must have already made extended and repeated sea voyages, though up to the present we have only heard of the journeys from Antioch to Cyprus, from Cyprus to Perga, and from Attaleia back to Antioch.<sup>1</sup> A two days' voyage across the fresh and rolling waters of the Mediterranean, following by a steep climb over Mountain Pangæus which intervenes between Philippi and its port Neapolis, made, however, a rest of a day or two very acceptable to the Apostle and his friends. St. Paul never expected too much from his own body, or from the bodies of his companions; and though he knew the work of a world's salvation was pressing, yet he could take

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earlier, tells us in one of his Epistles, speaking of the vanity of Capua, which was thoroughly Greek in spirit, and therefore very vain: "While in other colonies the magistrates are called *Duumviri*, these wish themselves to be styled *Prætors*," a weakness laughed at in Horace's *Satires*, lib. i., v. 34-6. Dion Chrysostom, a Greek rhetorician of St. Paul's day, mocks the Greeks for the same flashy spirit.

<sup>1</sup> The common pronunciation of Attaleia, or as it is spelt in the Authorised Version, Attalia, is with the *æ* short. The "i" represents, however, the Greek diphthong *αι*, and is long.

and enjoy a well-earned holiday from time to time. There was nothing in St. Paul of that eternal fussiness which we at times see in people of strong imaginations but weak self-control, who, realising the awful amount of woe and wickedness in the world, can never be at rest even for a little. The men of God remained quiet therefore (ch. xvi. 12, 13) till the Sabbath Day, when, after their usual custom, they sought out in the early morning the Jewish place of worship, where St. Paul always first proclaimed the gospel. The Jewish colony resident at Philippi must have been a very small one. The Rabbinical rule was that where ten wise men existed there a synagogue might be established.<sup>1</sup> There cannot therefore have been ten learned, respectable, and substantial Jews in Philippi competent to act as a local sanhedrin or court. Where, however, the Jews could not establish a synagogue, they did not live without any external expression of religion. They knew how easily neglect of public worship is followed by practical atheism, as we often see. Men may say indeed that God can be realised, and can be worshipped anywhere,—a very great truth and a very precious one for those who are unavoidably cut off from the public worship of the Most High; but a truth which has no application to those who wilfully cut themselves off from that worship which has the covenanted promise of His presence. It is not a good sign for the young men of this generation that so many of them utterly neglect public worship; for as surely as men act so, then present neglect will be followed by a total forgetfulness of the Eternal, and

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<sup>1</sup> See Dr. John Lightfoot's *Horæ Hebraicæ* on Matt. iv. 23; Works (London, 1684), vol. ii., pp. 132-34, for the Rabbinical legislation on Synagogues and their erection.

by a disregard of the laws which He has established amongst men. The Jews at Philippi did not follow this example; when they could not establish a synagogue they set apart an oratory or Place of Prayer, whither they resorted on the Sabbath Day to honour the God of their fathers, and to keep alive in their children's hearts the memory of His laws and doings.<sup>1</sup>

The original name of Philippi was Crenides, or Place of Streams.<sup>2</sup> Beside one of these streams the Jews had placed their oratory, and there St. Paul preached his first sermon in Europe and gained Lydia, his first European convert, a Jewess by blood, a woman of Thyatira in Asia Minor by birth, of Philippi in Macedonia by residence, and a dyer in purple by trade.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A local illustration of this typical Church history occurs to me. Oliver Cromwell planted Ireland, especially the golden vale of Tipperary, with his Puritan soldiers. They were strong Nonconformists, and refused therefore after the Restoration to worship according to the forms of the Established Church. Their children after a generation or two almost universally fell into the arms of the Church of Rome, and now many of the leading members of the National League are Roman Catholic descendants of Cromwell's Puritans, and display still the same vigorous qualities which adorned their Protestant ancestors in the copious abuse they pour upon the memory of the men from whom they are descended.

<sup>2</sup> I am here reminded of a place with exactly the same name which became as famous in the history of the Celtic Church as Philippi did in that of the Macedonian Church. Fore, in the county of Westmeath, means Place or Valley of Streams. It was celebrated in the seventh century as a great missionary establishment, at the head of which stood St. Fechin, a primitive Celtic missionary. His oratory, cell, and ancient church are still to be seen. I have described them in a paper contributed to the *Journal of the Society of Irish Antiquaries* for this year (1892). A comparison of St. Paul's missionary methods with those of St. Fechin would be interesting. They are fully described in Colgan's *Acts of the Irish Saints*.

<sup>3</sup> The guild of dyers at Thyatira is celebrated in the inscriptions belonging to that city found in Bœckh's *Corpus Inscriptionum Græcarum*.

The congregation of women assembled at that oratory must have been a very small one. When Philippi did not afford a sufficient Jewish population for the erection of a synagogue such as was found among the smaller towns of Asia Minor, and such as we shall in the course of the present tour find to have existed at towns and cities of no great size in Greece and Macedonia, then we may be sure that the female population, who assembled that Sabbath morning to pray and listen to the Scriptures, must have been a small one. But St. Paul and his companions had learned already one great secret of the true evangelist's life. They never despised a congregation because of its smallness. I have read somewhere in the writings of St. Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva, a remark bearing on this point. De Sales was an extreme Roman Catholic, and his mind was injured and his mental views perverted in many respects by the peculiar training he thus received. But still he was in many respects a very saintly man, and his writings embody much that is good for every one. In one of his letters which I have read he deals with this very point, and speaks of the importance of small congregations, first, because they have no tendency to feed the preacher's pride, but rather help to keep him humble ; and secondly, because some of the most effective and fruitful sermons have been preached to extremely small congregations, two or three persons at most, some one of whom has afterwards turned out to be a most vigorous soldier of the Cross of Christ. The most effective sermon perhaps that ever was preached was that delivered to Saul of Tarsus when to him alone came the voice, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" And here again, in the Philippian Oratory, the congregation was but a small one, yet the Apostle

despised it not. He and his companions bent all their powers to the work, threw their whole hearts into it, and as the result the Lord rewarded their earnest, thorough, faithful service as He rewards such service in every department of life's action. The Lord opened the heart of Lydia so that she attended to the apostolic teaching, and she and all her household when duly instructed became baptized disciples of Jesus of Nazareth.

This was an important incident in the history of the Philippian Church, and was attended by far-reaching results. Lydia herself, like so many others of God's most eminent saints, disappears at once and for ever from the scene. But her conversion was a fruitful one. St. Paul and his friends continued quietly but regularly working and teaching at the oratory. Lydia would seem to have been a widow, and must have been a woman of some position in the little community; for she was able to entertain the Apostle and his company as soon as she embraced the faith and felt its exceeding preciousness. When inviting them, too, she uses the language of a woman independent of all other control. "If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there," are words with the tone of one who as a widow owned no superior, and whose will was law within her own household; as well as the language of a woman who felt that the gospel she had embraced demanded and deserved the consecration to its service of all her worldly possessions. Previously to this conversion St. Paul had lived in hired lodgings, but now he moved to Lydia's residence, abiding there, and thence regularly worshipping at the Jewish oratory. The presence of these Jewish strangers soon attracted attention. Their teaching too got noised abroad, exaggerated doubtless



and distorted after the manner of popular reports. And the crowd were ready to be suspicious of all Eastern foreigners. The settlers in the colony of Philippi belonged to the rural population of Italy, who, after the manner of countrified folk of every generation, were a good way behind, for good or ill, their city brethren. The excavations made at Philippi have brought to light the fact that the colonists there were worshippers of the primitive Italian rustic gods, specially of the god Silvanus, eschewing the fashionable Greek deities, Jupiter, Juno, Venus, Diana, Apollo, and such like. A temple of Silvanus was erected at Philippi for the hardy Italian veterans, and numerous inscriptions have been found and have been duly described by the French Mission in Macedonia to which we have already referred, telling of the building of the temple and of the persons who contributed towards it.<sup>1</sup> These simple Western soldiers were easily prejudiced against the Eastern strangers by reports spread concerning their doctrines, and specially

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<sup>1</sup> See Leon Heuzey's *Mission Archéologique de Macédoine*, p. 71 (Paris, 1864-76). One tablet found furnishes a list of benefactions. One man gives a bronze statue of the deity, another helps to roof the building. Another tablet gives a list of the officials of the temple worship. Curiously enough among these officials occur names well known to us from St. Paul's Epistles, as Crescens, Secundus, Trophimus, Aristarchus, Pudens, Urbanus, and Clemens: cf. the Philippian inscriptions in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, vol. iii., par. i., pp. 120-28. Among these rude Italian veterans, unspoilt by the glitter and vices of Greek idolatry and civilisation, the Cross may have found out many true soldiers of Jesus Christ: see Lewin's *St. Paul*, vol. i., p. 210. It is interesting to notice that a similar set of tablets commemorating the benefactors of the temple of Diana at Ephesus was discovered in the excavations made twenty years ago at that place. The inscriptions are translated in the Appendix to Wood's *Ephesus*.



concerning the Jewish King, of whose kingdom they were the heralds. Political considerations were at once raised. We can scarcely now realise the suspicions which must have been roused against the early preachers of Christianity by the very language they used. Their sacramental language concerning the body and blood of Christ, the language of Christian love and union which they used, designating themselves brethren and sisters, caused for more than two centuries the dissemination of the most frightful rumours concerning the horrible nature of Christian love-feasts. They were accused of cannibalism and of the most degraded and immoral practices; and when we take up the Apologists of the second century, Justin Martyr and such like, we shall find that the efforts of these men are largely directed to the refutation of such dreadful charges.<sup>1</sup> And as it was in morals so was it too in politics. The sacred and religious language of the Christians caused them to be suspected of designs hostile to the Roman Government. The apostles preached about a King who ruled the kingdom of God. Now the Romans abhorred the very name and title of king, which they associated with the cruel acts of the early tyrants who reigned in the times of Rome's fabulous antiquity. The hostility to the title was so great that, though the Roman people endured a despotism much worse and crushing at the hands of the Cæsars, they never would allow them to assume the title of kings, but simply called them emperors, imperators or commanders of the army, a name which

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<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Justin Martyr's *First Apology*, ch. xxix., *Second Apology*, ch. xii., and Athenagoras' *Apology*, chs. xxxi.-xxxv. These passages will be found in Justin Martyr and Athenagoras as translated in T. & T. Clark's Ante-Nicene Series, pp. 32, 81, 415-19.

to their ears connoted nothing savouring of the kingly office, though for moderns the title of emperor expresses the kingly office and much more. The colonists in Philippi, being Italians, would feel these prejudices in their full force. Easterns indeed would have had no objection to the title of king, as we see from the cry raised by the mob of Jerusalem when they cried in reference to Christ's claim, "We have no king but Cæsar." But the rough and rude Roman veterans, when they heard vague reports of St. Paul's teaching to the Jews who met at the oratory by the river-side, quite naturally mistook the nature of his doctrine, and thought that he was simply a political agitator organising a revolt against imperial authority.<sup>1</sup> An incident which then occurred fanned the slumbering embers into a flame. There was a female slave the property of some crafty men who by her means traded on the simplicity of the colonists. She was possessed with a spirit of divination. What the nature of this spirit was we have not the means of now determining. Some would resolve it into mere epilepsy, but such an explanation is not consistent with St. Paul's action and words. He addressed the spirit, "I charge thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And the spirit, we are told, came out that very hour. The simple fact is that psychology is at the best a very obscure science,

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<sup>1</sup> This political prejudice against Christianity lasted into the second century : see the *First Apology* of Justin Martyr, ch. xi. : "When you hear that we look for a kingdom, you suppose, without making any inquiry, that we speak of a human kingdom ; whereas we speak of that which is with God, as appears also from the confession of their faith made by those who are charged with being Christians, though they know that death is the punishment awarded to him who so confesses" ; words which imply that in Justin's day many had been martyred on mere political accusations.

and the mysteries of the soul a very puzzling region, even under the Christian Dispensation and surrounded by the spiritual blessings of the kingdom of God. But paganism was the kingdom of Satan, where he ruled with a power and freedom he no longer enjoys, and we can form no conception of the frightful disturbances Satanic agency may have raised amid the dark places of the human spirit. Without attempting explanations therefore, which must be insufficient, I am content to accept the statement of the sacred writer, who was an eye-witness of the cure, that the spirit of divination, the spirit of Python, as the original puts it, yielded obedience to the invocation of the sacred Name which is above every name, leaving the damsel's inner nature once more calm and at union within itself. This was the signal for a riot. The slave owners recognised that their hopes of gain had fled. They were not willing to confess that these despised Jews possessed a power transcending far that which dwelt in the human instrument who had served their covetous purposes. They may have heard, it may be, of the tumults excited about this same time by the Jews at Rome and of their expulsion from the capital by the decree of the Emperor, so the owners of the slave-girl and the mob of the city dragged the Apostles before the local Duumvirs and accused them of like disturbances: "These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and set forth customs which it is not lawful for us to receive or to observe, being Romans." The accusation was sufficient. No proof was demanded, no time for protest allowed. The magistrates with their own hands dragged the clothes off the backs of the Apostles, and they were flogged at once by the lictors or sergeants, as our translation calls them, in attendance upon the Duumvirs,

who then despatched their victims to the common prison. Here a question may be raised, Why did not St. Paul save himself by protesting that he was a Roman citizen, as he did subsequently at Jerusalem when he was about to be similarly treated? Several explanations occur. The colonists were Italians and spoke Latin. St. Paul spoke Hebrew and Greek, and though he may have known Latin too, his Latin may not have been understood by these rough Roman soldiers. The mob again was excited, and when a mob gets excited it is but very little its members attend to an unfortunate prisoner's words. We know too, not only from St. Paul's own words, but from the testimony of Cicero himself, in his celebrated oration against Verres, that in remote districts this claim was often disregarded, even when urged by Italians, and much more when made by despised Jews. St. Paul tells us in 2 Cor. xi. 25, that he received three Roman floggings notwithstanding his Roman citizenship, and though the Philipian magistrates were afraid when they heard next day of the illegal violence of which they had been guilty, the mob, who could not be held accountable, probably took right good care that St. Paul's protest never reached the official ears to which it was addressed. These considerations sufficiently account for the omission of any notice of a protest on the Apostle's part. He simply had not the opportunity, and then when the tumultuous scene was over Paul and Silas were hurried off to the common dungeon, where they were secured in the stocks and thrust into the innermost prison as notorious and scandalous offenders.

No ill-treatment could, however, destroy that secret source of joy and peace which St. Paul possessed in his loved Master's conscious presence. "I take pleasure

in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake," is his own triumphant expression when looking back a few years later over the way by which the Lord had led him, and therefore at midnight the astonished prisoners heard the inner dungeon ringing with unwonted songs of praise raised by the Jewish strangers. An earthquake, too, lent its terrors to the strange scene, shaking the prison to its foundations and loosing the staples to which the prisoners' chains were fastened. The jailor, roused from sleep, and seeing the prison doors opened wide, would have committed suicide were it not for Paul's restraining and authoritative voice ; and then the astonished official, who must have heard the strange rumours to which the words of the demoniac alluded—"These men are the servants of the Most High God, which proclaim unto you the way of salvation"—rushed into the presence of the Apostles crying out in words which have ever since been famous, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" to which the equally famous answer was given, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house." The jailor then took the Apostles, bathed their bruised bodies, set food before them, gathered his household to listen to the glad tidings, which they received so rapidly and grasped so thoroughly that they were at once baptized and enabled to rejoice with that deep spiritual joy which an experimental knowledge of God always confers. The jailor, feeling for the first time in his life the peace which passeth all understanding, realised the truth which St. Augustine afterwards embodied in the immortal words: "Thou, O God, hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Augustine's *Confessions*, i. i.

Let us look for a little at the question of the jailor and the answer of the Apostle. They are words very often used, and very often misused. The jailor, when he rushed into St. Paul's presence crying out "What must I do to be saved?" was certainly not the type of a conscience-stricken sinner, convinced of his own sin and spiritual danger, as men sometimes regard him. He was simply in a state of fright and astonishment. He had heard that these Jewish prisoners committed to him were preaching about some salvation which they had to offer. The earthquake seemed to him the expression of some deity's wrath at their harsh treatment, and so in his terror he desires to know what he must do to be saved from this wrath. His words were notable, but they were not Christian words, for he had yet much to learn of the nature of sin and the nature of the salvation from it which the Apostles were preaching. The Philippian jailor was a specimen of those who are saved violently and by fear. Terror forced him into communion with the Apostles, broke down the barriers which hindered the approach of the Word, and then the power of the Holy Ghost, working through St. Paul, effected the remainder, opening his eyes to the true character of salvation and his own profound need of it. St. Paul's words have been misunderstood. I have heard them addressed to a Christian congregation and explained as meaning that the jailor had nothing to do but just realise Christ Jesus as his Saviour, whereupon he was perfect and complete so far as the spiritual life was concerned; and then they were applied to the congregation present as teaching that, as it was with the jailor, so was it with all Christians; they have simply to believe as he did, and then they have nothing more to do,—a kind of teaching which infallibly produces



antinomian results.<sup>1</sup> Such an explanation ignores the fact that there is a great difference between the jailor, who was not a Christian in any sense and knew nothing about Christ when he flung himself at St. Paul's feet, and a Christian congregation, who know about Christ and believe in Him. But this explanation is still more erroneous. It misrepresents what St. Paul meant and what his hearers understood him to mean. What did any ordinary Jew or any ordinary pagan with whom St. Paul came in contact understand him to mean when he said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved"? They first had to ask him who Jesus Christ was, whence He had come, what He had taught, what were the obligations of His religion. St. Paul had to open out to them the nature of sin and salvation, and to explain the obligation and blessing of the sacrament of baptism as well as the necessity of bodily holiness and purity. The initial sacrament of baptism must have held a foremost place in that midnight colloquy or conference concerning Christian truth. St. Paul was not the man to perform a rite of which his converts understood nothing, and to which they could attach no meaning. "Believe on the Lord Jesus" involved repentance and contrition and submission to Christian truth, and these things involved the exposition of Christian truth, history, doctrines, and duties.

This text, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved," is often quoted in one-sided and narrow teaching to show that man has nothing to do to be saved. Of course in one sense this is perfectly

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<sup>1</sup> See more on this point in vol. i., pp. 134-37, where I have given conclusive proofs of the misuse of this text from the writers of the seventeenth century.



true. We can do nothing *meritoriously* towards salvation ; from first to last our salvation is all of God's free grace ; but then, viewing the matter from the human side, we have much to do to be saved. We have to repent, to seek God for ourselves, to realise Christ and His laws in our life, to seek after that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. There were two different types of men who at different times addressed practically the same inquiry to the Apostles. They were both outside the Church, and they were both seekers blindly after God. The Jews on the day of Pentecost said, "Brethren, what shall we do?" and Peter replied, "Repent ye, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, unto the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Such was apostolic teaching to the Jews of Jerusalem. The jailer demanded, "What must I do to be saved?" and St. Paul replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved." Such was apostolic teaching to an ignorant pagan at Philippi ; more concise than the Jerusalem answer, but meaning the same thing, and involving precisely the same doctrines in the hands of such a great master of the spiritual life as was the Apostle of the Gentiles.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Sadler, in his Commentary on the Acts, treating of this passage has a long explanation identical in meaning with that which we have above urged. He says, for instance, p. 314 : "This statement of the way of salvation is one of the most important in the New Testament. It contains the seed of the whole body of apostolic doctrine respecting salvation by Christ. When I say apostolic, I mean the doctrine of SS. Peter and John, as well as of St. Paul ; for all being full of the Holy Ghost preached the same. Few places have been more perverted in order to uphold a heresy which, if St. Paul had been alive now, he would have abhorred, and denounced as fatal to the whole revelation of the Son of God, and that is antimonianism. . . . The Philippian jailor to whom the words were first addressed had never in

The remainder of the story is soon told. When the morning came there came quiet reflection with it as far as the magistrates were concerned. They became conscious of their illegal conduct, and they sent their lictors to order the release of the Apostles. St. Paul now stood upon his rights. His protest had been disregarded by the mob. He now claimed his rights as a Roman citizen. "They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned men, that are Romans, and have cast us into prison; and do they now cast us out privily? Nay, verily; but let them come themselves and bring us out." These are St. Paul's words, and they are brave, and at the same time wise words. They were brave words because it took a strong man to send back such an answer to magistrates who had treated him so outrageously only the day before. They were wise words, for they give us an apostle's interpretation of our Lord's language in the Sermon upon the Mount concerning the non-resistance of evil, and show us that in St. Paul's estimation Christ's law did not bind a man to tolerate foul injustice. Such toleration, in fact, is very wrong if it can be helped; because it is simply an encouragement to the wicked doers to treat others in the same scandalous manner. Toleration of outrage and injustice is

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all probability heard the name of Jesus Christ before. . . . 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ' then meant to him, 'Believe on Him whom we are now about to set forth to thee.' And they there and then began to set Him forth, for they spake unto him 'the word of the Lord.' . . . This word must have shown him how—on what principle—he could exercise faith in Him so as to be saved. But did they call on him in his then state to believe anything respecting the Church and the sacraments of Christ? Unquestionably; for St. Paul would certainly not baptize a man who was totally ignorant of the grace of union with Christ which he would receive, and the obligations to serve Christ which he would come under, by being baptized."

unfair and uncharitable towards others, if they can be lawfully redressed or at least apologised for. It is a Christian man's duty to bring public evil-doers and tyrants, instruments of unrighteousness like these Duumvirs of Philippi, to their senses, not for his own sake, but in order that he may prevent the exercise of similar cruelties against the weaker brethren. We may be sure that the spirited action of St. Paul, compelling these provincial magnates to humble themselves before the despised strangers, must have had a very wholesome effect in restraining them from similar violence during the rest of their term of office.

Such was St. Paul's stay at Philippi. It lasted a considerable time, and made its mark, as a flourishing Church was established there, to which he addressed an Epistle when he lay the first time a captive at Rome. This Epistle naturally forms a most interesting commentary on the notices of the Philippian visit in the Acts of the Apostles, a point which is worked out at large in Bishop Lightfoot's Commentary on Philippians and in Paley's *Horæ Paulinæ*. The careful student of Holy Writ will find that St. Paul's letter and St. Luke's narrative when compared illuminate one another in a wondrous manner. We cannot afford space to draw out this comparison in detail, and it is the less necessary to do so as Dr. Lightfoot's writings are so generally accessible. Let us, however, notice one point in this Epistle to the Philippians, which was written about the same time (a few months previously, in fact) as the Acts of the Apostles. It corroborates the Acts as to the circumstances under which the Church of Philippi was founded. St. Paul in the Epistle refers again and again to the persecutions and afflictions of the Philippian Church, and implies that he was a fellow-

sufferer with them.<sup>1</sup> St. Paul dwells on this in the beginning of the Epistle in words whose force cannot be understood unless we grasp this fact. In the sixth verse of the first chapter he expresses himself as, "Confident of this very thing, that He which began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ: even as it is right for me to be thus minded on behalf of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as, both in my bonds and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers with me of grace." St. Paul speaks of the Philippians as personally acquainted with chains and sufferings and prison-houses for Christ's sake, and regards these things as a proof of God's grace vouchsafed not only to the Apostle, but also to the Philippians; for St. Paul was living at that high level when he could view bonds and trials and persecutions as marks of the Divine love. In the twenty-eighth verse of the same chapter he exhorts them to be in no wise "affrighted by the adversaries," and in the next two describes them as persons to whom "it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer in His behalf: having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me," words which can only refer to the violence and afflictions which they witnessed as practised against himself, and which they

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<sup>1</sup> Bishop Lightfoot (*Philippians*, p. 57) says: "St. Paul's first visit to Philippi closed abruptly amid the storm of persecution. It was not to be expected that where the life of the teacher had been so seriously endangered, the scholars would escape all penalties. The Apostle left behind him a legacy of suffering to this newly born Church. This is not a mere conjecture; the affliction of the Macedonian Christians, and of the Philippians especially, are more than once mentioned in St. Paul's Epistles (cf. 1 Thess. ii. 2). If it was their privilege to believe in Christ, it was equally their privilege to suffer for Him."

were now themselves suffering in turn. While to complete St. Paul's references we notice that in an Epistle written some five years later than his first visit to Philippi he expressly refers to the persecutions which the Philippian Church in common with all the Macedonian Churches seems to have suffered from the very beginning. In 2 Cor. viii. 1, 2, he writes : "Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God which hath been given in the Churches of Macedonia ; how that *in much proof of affliction* the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality." Now all these passages put together confirm for us what the Acts expressly affirms, that from the very outset of their Christian career the Philippian Church had endured the greatest trials, and experienced a fellowship in the Apostle's sufferings. And surely we may see in the character of the Philippian Epistle something eminently characteristic of this experience ! It has been remarked that the Philippian Epistle is the only Epistle addressed to a Church in which there is no trace of blame or reproof. Temptation and trial and chastisement had there worked their appointed purpose. The Philippian Church had been baptized in blood, and grounded in afflictions, and purified by the cleansing fires of persecution, and consequently the tried Church gathered itself closer to its Divine Lord, and was perfected above all others in His likeness, and profited above all others in the Divine life.<sup>1</sup>

After the terrible experience of Philippi Paul and

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Lightfoot, in his Commentary on Philippians, *l.c.*, dwells on this point : "The unwavering loyalty of his Philippian converts is the constant solace of the Apostle in his manifold trials, the one bright ray of happiness piercing the dark clouds which gather ever thicker about the

Silas passed on to other towns of the same province of Macedonia. The Apostle, however, when quitting Philippi to do the same evangelistic work, breaking up the ground in other towns after the manner of a pioneer, did not leave the Church of Philippi devoid of wisest pastoral care. It is most likely, as Dr. Lightfoot points out in the Introduction to his Commentary on Philippians, that St. Luke was left behind to consolidate the work which had been thus begun by such a noble company. Then Paul and Silas and Timotheus proceeded to Thessalonica, one hundred miles west, the capital of the province, where the proconsul resided, and where was a considerable Jewish population, as we see, not only from the fact that a synagogue is expressly said to have existed there, but also because the Jews were able to excite the city pagan mob against the Apostles and drag them before the local magistrates.<sup>1</sup> St. Paul at Philippi had for the first time experienced a purely pagan persecution. He had indeed previously suffered at the hands of the heathen at Lystra, but they were urged on by the Jews. At Philippi he gained

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evening of his life. They are his 'joy and crown, his brethren beloved and eagerly desired.' From them alone he consents to receive alms for the relief of his personal wants. To them alone he writes in language unclouded by any shadow of displeasure or disappointment."

<sup>1</sup> Thessalonica is to this day the abode of a large Jewish population. Tozer, in his *Highlands of Turkey*, vol. i., p. 146, says: "Of the sixty thousand inhabitants of Salonica two-thirds are Jews, the rest being Turks and Greeks. . . . From early times the Hebrew race seem to have been attracted by the commercial advantages of Salonica. Thus when St. Paul preached there he found a considerable Jewish community. . . . A large number of the Salonica Jews are rich merchants, and a great part of the wealth of the place is in their hands." Mr. Lewin, in his *St. Paul*, vol. i., p. 222, gives a table of the distances all along St. Paul's route.



his first glimpse of that long vista of purely Gentile persecution through which the Church had to pass till Christianity seated itself in the person of Constantine on the throne of the Cæsars. But as soon as he got to Thessalonica he again experienced the undying hostility of his Jewish fellow-countrymen using for their wicked purposes the baser portion of the city rabble.<sup>1</sup> St. Paul remained three weeks in Thessalonica teaching privately and publicly the gospel message, without experiencing any Jewish opposition. It is an interesting fact that to this day St. Paul's visit to Thessalonica is remembered, and in one of the local mosques, which was formerly the Church of Sancta Sophia, a marble pulpit is shown, said to have been the very one occupied by the Apostle, while in the surrounding plains trees and groves are pointed out as marking spots where he tarried for a time. The Jews were at last, however, roused to opposition, possibly because of St. Paul's success among the Gentiles, who received his doctrines with such avidity that there believed "of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few." In Thessalonica, as elsewhere, the spirit of religious selfishness, desiring to have gospel promises and a Messiah all to themselves, was the ruin of the Jewish people. The Jews therefore, assisted by the pagans, assaulted the residence of Jason, with whom St. Paul and his friends were staying. They missed the Apostles themselves, but they seized Jason and some of the apostolic band, or at least some of their converts whom they found in Jason's house, and brought them before the town magistrates, who, acting

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Findlay, in a little work lately published, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle*, has many valuable observations on the subject of the Jewish opposition experienced by the Apostle at Thessalonica.



under the eye of the resident proconsul, did not lend themselves to any irregular proceedings like the Philipian prætors. A charge of treason was formally brought against the prisoners: "These all act contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another King, one Jesus"; in the words of which charge we get a glimpse of the leading topic on which the Apostles insisted. Jesus Christ, the crucified, risen, glorified King and Head of His people, was the great subject of St. Paul's teaching as it struck the heathen. The Thessalonian magistrates acted very fairly. They entered the charge which was a serious one in the eye of Roman law. Bail was then taken for the accused and they were set free. The Apostles, however, escaped arrest, and the local brethren determined that they should incur no danger; so while the accused remained to stand their trial, Paul and Silas and Timotheus were despatched to Berœa, where they were for a time welcomed, and free discussion permitted in the synagogue concerning the truths taught by the Evangelists. After a time, however, tidings having reached Thessalonica, agents were despatched to Berœa, who stirring up the Jewish residents, St. Paul was despatched in charge of some trusty messengers who guided the steps of the hunted servant of God to the city of Athens. We see the physical infirmities of St. Paul, the difficulties he had to contend with, hinted at in the fourteenth and fifteenth verses of the seventeenth chapter. "Then immediately the brethren sent forth Paul," and "They that conducted Paul brought him to Athens," words which give us a glimpse of his fearfully defective eyesight. His enemies might be pressing upon him and danger might be imminent, but he could make no unaided effort to save himself. He depended upon the

kindly help of others that he might escape his untiring foes and find his way to a place of safety.

Thus ended St. Paul's first visit to Thessalonica so far as the Acts of the Apostles is concerned ; but we have interesting light thrown upon it from an Epistle which St. Paul himself wrote to the Thessalonians soon after his departure from amongst them. A comparison of First Thessalonians with the text of the Acts will furnish the careful student with much information concerning the circumstances of that notable visit, just as we have seen that the text of the Philippian Epistle throws light upon his doings at Philippi. The Thessalonian Epistles are more helpful even than the Philippians in this respect, because they were written only a few months after St. Paul's visit to Thessalonica, while years elapsed, eight or ten at least, before the Philippian Epistle was indited. First Thessalonians shows us, for instance, that St. Paul's visit to Thessalonica lasted a considerable time. In the Acts we read of his discussing in the synagogue three Sabbath days, and then it would appear as if the riot was raised which drove him to Berea and Athens. The impression left on our minds by St. Luke's narrative is that St. Paul's labours were almost entirely concentrated upon the Jews in Thessalonica, and that he bestowed very little attention indeed upon the pagans. The Epistle corrects this impression. When we read the first chapter of First Thessalonians we see that it was almost altogether a church of converted idolaters, not of converted Jews. St. Paul speaks of the Thessalonians as having turned from idols to serve the living God ; he refers to the instructions on various points like the resurrection, the ascension, the second coming of Christ, which

he had imparted, and describes their faith and works as celebrated throughout all Macedonia and Achaia. A large and flourishing church like that, composed of former pagans, could not have been founded in the course of three weeks, during which time St. Paul's attention was principally bestowed on the Jewish residents. Then too, when we turn to Philippians iv. 16, we find that St. Paul stayed long enough in Thessalonica to receive no less than two remittances of money from the brethren at Philippi to sustain himself and his brethren. His whole attention too was not bestowed upon mission work; he spent his days and nights in manual labour. In the ninth verse of the second chapter of First Thessalonians he reminds them of the fact that he supported himself in their city, "For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: working night and day, that we might not burden any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God." When we realise these things we shall feel that the Apostle must have spent at least a couple of months in Thessalonica. It was perhaps his tremendous success among the heathen which so stirred up the passions of the town mob as enabled the Jews to instigate them to raise the riot, they themselves keeping all the while in the background. St. Paul, in First Thessalonians, describes the riots raised against the Christians as being the immediate work of the pagans: "Ye, brethren, became imitators of the Churches of God which are in Judæa in Christ Jesus. For ye also suffered the same things of your own countrymen as they did of the Jews"; a statement which is quite consistent with the theory that the persecution was originally inspired by the Jews. But we cannot further pursue this interesting line of inquiry

which has been thoroughly worked out by Mr. Lewin in vol. ii., ch. xi., by Conybeare and Howson in ch. ix., and by Archdeacon Farrar, as well as by Dr. Salmon in his *Introduction to the New Testament*, ch. xx. The careful student will find in all these works most interesting light reflected back upon the Acts from the apostolic letters, and will see how thoroughly the Epistles, which were much the earlier documents, confirm the independent account of St. Luke, writing at a subsequent period.

Before we terminate this chapter we desire to call attention to one other point where the investigations of modern travel have helped to illustrate the genuineness of the Acts of the Apostles. It has been the contention of the rationalistic party that the Acts was a composition of the second century, worked up by a clever forger out of the materials at his command. There are various lines of proof by which this theory can be refuted, but none appeal so forcibly to ordinary men as the minute accuracy which marks it when describing the towns of Asia Minor and Macedonia. Macedonia is a notable case. We have already pointed out how the Acts give their proper title to the magistrates of Philippi and recognise its peculiar constitution as a colony. Thessalonica forms an interesting contrast to Philippi. Thessalonica was a free city, like Antioch in Syria, Tarsus, and Athens, and therefore, though the residence of the proconsul who ruled the province of Macedonia, was governed by its own ancient magistrates and its own ancient laws, without any interference on the part of the proconsul. St. Luke makes a marked distinction between Philippi and Thessalonica. At Philippi the Apostles were brought before the prætors, at Thessalonica they were brought

before the politarchs,<sup>1</sup> a title strange to classical antiquity, but which has been found upon a triumphal arch which existed till a few years ago across the main street of the modern city of Thessalonica. That arch has now disappeared; but the fragments containing the inscription were fortunately preserved and have been now placed in the British Museum, where they form a precious relic proving the genuineness of the sacred narrative.

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<sup>1</sup> This case of Thessalonica is an interesting illustration of Bishop Lightfoot's statement:—"The government of the Roman provinces at this time was peculiarly dangerous ground for the romance-writer to venture upon" (*Essays on Supernatural Religion*, p. 291). If the Roman provinces were a dangerous ground for a romance-writer, such as some critics would make the author of the Acts, the government of the large Græco-Roman towns and cities was still more dangerous, as scarcely any two successive ones were alike. Thessalonica is a good instance of this. St. Luke calls the magistrates politarchs, and the triumphal arch at Thessalonica calls them politarchs; a title which seems to have been a very rare one, as only one other instance of its occurrence has been discovered. Monastir, in the north-west of Macedonia, is an important town, and there an inscription belonging to the ancient Deuriopus, twelve miles distant, was found more than twenty years ago containing the same title, politarchs. Surely the stones out of the walls of Thessalonica and of Monastir cry out in defence of St. Luke's accuracy! See Mr. Tozer's *Highlands of Turkey*, vol. i., p. 145, and vol. ii., p. 358, Append. B; Boeckh's *Corp. Ins. Græc.*, No. 1967; articles by the Abbé Belley in the *Acad. des Inscript.*, xxxviii., p. 125, and by Mr. Vaux in the *Trans. of Roy. Soc. of Literature*, vol. viii., new series.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### ST. PAUL IN GREECE.

“Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him, as he beheld the city full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the market-place every day with them that met with him. And certain also of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, What would this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods : because he preached Jesus and the resurrection.”  
—ACTS xvii. 16-18.

“After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth.”  
—ACTS xviii. 1.

THERE are parallelisms in history which are very striking, and yet these parallelisms can be easily explained. The stress and strain of difficulties acting upon large masses of men evolve and call forth similar types of character, and demand the exercise of similar powers. St. Paul and St. Athanasius are illustrations of this statement. They were both little men, both enthusiastic in their views, both pursued all their lives long with bitter hostility, and both had experience of the most marvellous and hairbreadth escapes. If any reader will take up Dean Stanley's *History of the Eastern Church*, and read the account given of St. Athanasius in the seventh chapter of that work, he will be strikingly reminded of St. Paul in these various aspects, but specially in the matter of his wondrous escapes from his deadly enemies, which were so numerous that at

last they came to regard Athanasius as a magician who eluded their designs by the help of his familiar spirits. It was much the same with St. Paul. Hairbreadth escapes were his daily experience, as he himself points out in the eleventh chapter of his Second Epistle to Corinth. He there enumerates a few of them, but quite omits his escapes from Jerusalem, from the Pisidian Antioch, from Iconium, Lystra, Thessalonica, and last of all from Berœa, whence he was driven by the renewed machinations of the Thessalonian Jews, who found out after a time whither the object of their hatred had fled. Paul's ministry at Berœa was not fruitless, short as it may have been. He established a Church there which took good care of the precious life entrusted to its keeping, and therefore as soon as the deputies of the Thessalonian synagogue came to Berœa and began to work upon the Jews of the local synagogue, as well as upon the pagan mob of the town, the Berœan disciples took Paul, who was the special object of Jewish hatred, and despatched him down to the sea-coast, some twenty miles distant, in charge of certain trusty messengers, while Silas remained behind, in temporary concealment doubtless, in order that he might consolidate the Church.<sup>1</sup> Here we get a hint, a passing glimpse of St. Paul's infirmity. He was despatched in charge of trusty messengers, I have said, who were to show him the way. "They that conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens." His ophthalmia, perhaps, had become specially bad owing to the rough

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<sup>1</sup> It is well, perhaps, to bear in mind the distances which separate the various stages of St. Paul's progress through Macedonia. Thessalonica was about a hundred miles from Philippi, Berœa fifty from Thessalonica, and the sea-coast of the Thermaic Gulf, or the Gulf of Salonica, as it is now called, some twenty miles from Berœa.



usage he had experienced, and so he could not escape all solitary and alone as he did in earlier years from Damascus, and therefore guides were necessary who should conduct him "as far as the sea," and then, when they had got that far, they did not leave him alone. They embarked in the ship with him, and, sailing to Athens, deposited him safely in a lodging. The journey was by sea, not by land, because a sea journey was necessarily much easier for the sickly and weary Apostle than the land route would have been, offering too a much surer escape from the dangers of pursuit.

The voyage was an easy one, and not too prolonged. The boat or ship in which the Apostle was embarked passed through splendid scenery. On his right hand, as he steered for the south, was the magnificent mountain of Olympus, the fabled abode of the gods, rising a clear ten thousand feet into the region of perpetual snow, while on his left was Mount Athos, upon which he had been looking ever since the day that he left Troas. But the Apostle had no eye for the scenery, nor had St. Luke a word to bestow upon its description, though he often passed through it, absorbed as they were in the contemplation of the awful realities of a world unseen. The sea voyage from the place where St. Paul embarked till he came to Phalerum, the port of Athens, where he landed, lasted perhaps three or four days, and covered about two hundred miles, being somewhat similar in distance, scenery, and surroundings to the voyage from Glasgow to Dublin or Bristol, land in both cases being in sight all the time and splendid mountain ranges bounding the views on either side.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The best description which I know of this neighbourhood is that given by Mr. Tozer in his *Highlands of Turkey*, vol. ii., p. 8. St. Paul embarked at the head of the long, narrow gulf, called anciently the

St. Paul landed about November 1st, 51, at Phalerum, one of the two ports of ancient Athens, the Piræus being the other, and thence his uncertain steps were guided to the city itself, where he was left alone in some lodging. The Berean Christians to whom he was entrusted returned perhaps in the same vessel in which they had previously travelled, as the winter season, when navigation largely ceased, was now fast advancing, bearing with them a message to Timothy and Silas to come as rapidly as possible to his assistance, the Apostle being practically helpless when deprived of his trusted friends. At Athens St. Paul for a time moved about examining the city for himself, a process which soon roused him to action and brought matters to a crisis. St. Paul was well used to pagan towns and the sights with which they were filled. From his earliest youth in Tarsus idolatry and its abominations must have been a pain and grief to him; but Athens he found to exceed them all, so that "his spirit was provoked within him as he beheld the city full of idols." We have in ancient Greek literature the most interesting confirmation of the statement here made by St. Luke. We still possess a descriptive account of Greece written by a chatty Greek traveller named

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Thermaic Gulf, leading up to the city of Thessalonica. The Apostle must have sailed in a mere fishing smack or good-sized boat, as the iron-bound western coast of this gulf is devoid of harbours sufficient for large ships. Mr. Tozer himself sailed from Thessalonica in such a vessel, see *l.c.*, vol. ii., p. 4: "We chartered a vessel to convey us down the bay, a six-oared Smyrna caique, quite elegant in her appointments as compared with the ordinary lumbering market boats and coasters of these seas, and a tight little craft withal, for though not more than six feet in width, and without a deck, she had made a voyage to the Crimea during the war." Cicero, even when going as proconsul into Asia travelled in the "undecked vessel of the Rhodians," of whose weakness and slowness he complains: see his letters to Atticus, v. 12 and 13.

Pausanias, in the days of the Antonines, that is, less than a hundred years after St. Paul's visit, and when Athens was practically the same as in the Apostle's day. Pausanias enters into the greatest details about Athens, describing the statues of gods and heroes, the temples, the worship, the customs of the people, bestowing the first thirty chapters of his first book upon Athens alone. Pausanias's *Description of Greece*<sup>1</sup> is most interesting to every one because he saw Athens in the height of its literary glory and architectural splendour, and it is specially interesting to the Bible student because it amply confirms and illustrates the details of St. Paul's visit.

Thus we are told in words just quoted that St. Paul found "the city full of idols," and this provoked his spirit over and above the usual provocation he received wherever he found dead idols like these usurping the place rightfully belonging to the Lord of the universe. Now let us take up Pausanias, and what does he tell us? In his first chapter he tells how the ports of Athens were crowded on every side with temples, and adorned with statues of gold and silver. Phalerum, the port where Paul landed, had temples of Demeter, of Athene, of Zeus, and "altars of gods unknown," of which we shall presently speak. Then we can peruse chapter after chapter crowded with descriptions of statues and temples, till in the seventeenth chapter we read how in their pantheistic enthusiasm they idolised the most impalpable of things: "The Athenians have in the market-place, among other things not universally notable, an altar of Mercy, to whom, though

<sup>1</sup> This important work may be most easily consulted in Shilleto's translation, published in Bohn's Classical Library, Bell & Sons, London, 1886.

most useful of all the gods to the life of man and its vicissitudes, the Athenians alone of all the Greeks assign honours. And not only is philanthropy more regarded among them, but they also exhibit more piety to the gods than others; for they have also an altar to Shame and Rumour and Energy. And it is clear that those people who have a larger share of piety than others have also a larger share of good fortune." While again, in chapter xxiv., dwelling upon the statues of Hercules and Athene, Pausanias remarks, "I have said before that the Athenians, more than any other Greeks, have a zeal for religion." Athens was, at the time of St. Paul's visit, the leading university of the world, and university life then was permeated with the spirit of paganism, the lovers of philosophy and science delighting to adorn Athens with temples and statues and endowments as expressions of the gratitude they felt for the culture which they had there gained.<sup>1</sup> These things had, however, no charm for the Apostle Paul. Some moderns, viewing him from an unsympathetic point of view, would describe him in their peculiar language as a mere Philistine in spirit, unable to recognise the material beauty and glory which lay around. And this is true. The beauty which the architect and the sculptor would admire was for the Apostle to a large extent non-existent, owing to his defective eyesight; but even when recognised it was an object rather of dislike and of abhorrence than of admiration and pleasure, because

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<sup>1</sup> The Emperor Hadrian, for instance, adorned Athens with expensive buildings and libraries, and enriched it with endowments. See Duhr's work, p. 44, on the *Journeys of the Emperor Hadrian*, published in the Proceedings of the Archæological Society of Vienna; and cf. Pausanias, i. 18.

the Apostle saw deeper than the man of mere superficial culture and æsthetic taste. The Apostle saw these idols and the temples consecrated to their use from the moral and spiritual standpoint, and viewed them therefore as the outward and visible signs of an inward festering corruption and rottenness, the more beautiful perhaps because of the more awful decay which lay beneath.

The glimpses which St. Paul got of Athens as he wandered about roused his spirit and quickened him to action. He followed his usual course therefore. He first sought his own countrymen the Jews. There was a colony of Jews at Athens, as we know from independent sources. Philo was a Jew the authenticity of whose writings, at least in great part, has never been questioned. He lived at Alexandria at this very period, and was sent, about twelve years earlier, as an ambassador to Rome to protest against the cruel persecutions to which the Alexandrian Jews had been subjected at the time when Caligula made the attempt to erect his statue at Jerusalem, of which we have spoken in a previous chapter. He wrote an account of his journey to Rome and his treatment by the Emperor, which is called *Legatio ad Caium*, and in it he mentions Athens as one of the cities where a considerable Jewish colony existed.<sup>1</sup> We know practically nothing more about

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<sup>1</sup> Any one wishing to consult the writings of this contemporary of St. Paul can find Philo's works translated into English in 4 vols. in Bohn's Library of Ecclesiastical Antiquity. A comparison of St. Paul's writings with those of Philo will show us the wondrous superiority of those of the Christian Apostle, owing to his inspiration by the Holy Ghost. St. Paul's writings are a perpetual feast of fat things nourishing the soul unto everlasting life. The writings of Philo are curious and interesting, but no one would dream of taking them as a spiritual guide of life.

this Jewish colony save what we are told here by St. Luke, that it was large enough to have a synagogue, not a mere oratory like the Philippian Jews.<sup>1</sup> It cannot, however, have been a very large one. Athens was not a seat of any considerable trade, and therefore had no such attractions for the Jews as either Thessalonica or Corinth; while its abounding idolatry and its countless images would be repellant to their feelings. Modern investigations have, indeed, brought to light a few ancient inscriptions testifying to the presence of Jews at Athens in these earlier ages; but otherwise we know nothing about them. The synagogue seems to have imbibed a good deal of the same easy-going contemptuously tolerant spirit with which the whole atmosphere of Athens was infected. Jews and pagans alike listened to St. Paul, and then turned away to their own pursuits. In a city where every religion was represented, and every religion discussed and laughed at, how could any one be very much in earnest? St. Paul then turned from the Jews to the Gentiles. He frequented the market-place, a well-known spot, near to the favourite meeting-place of the Stoic philosophers.<sup>2</sup> There St. Paul entered into discussion with individuals or with groups as they presented themselves.

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<sup>1</sup> The Athenians had for a long time previous to St. Paul's visit some commercial relations with the Jewish nation. Josephus, *Antiqq.*, XIV. 8, tells us how they erected a brass statue of the high priest Hyrcanus, as an expression of their good will to the Jewish nation. This was a hundred years before St. Paul's visit. Bayet discovered early Jewish inscriptions among the Athenian cemeteries. See his *De Titulis Atticæ Christianis*, pp. 122-24, of which we treat in a note *infra*.

<sup>2</sup> Pausanias, i. 15, gives a description of the Porch or Painted Chamber, the Stoa Pœcile, whence the Stoics derived their name, showing that it was close to the Agora, or market-place, where Paul disputed.



The philosophers soon took notice of the new-comer. His manner, terribly in earnest, would soon have secured attention in any society, and much more in Athens, where whole-souled and intense enthusiasm was the one intellectual quality which was completely wanting. For who but a man that had heard the voice of God and had seen the vision of the Almighty could be in earnest in a city where residents and strangers sojourning there all alike spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing? The philosophers and Stoics and Epicureans alike were attracted by St. Paul's manner. They listened to him as he discoursed of Jesus and the Resurrection, the two topics which absorbed him. They mistook his meaning in a manner very natural to the place, strange as it may seem to us. In Athens the popular worship was thoroughly Pantheistic. Every desire, passion, infirmity even of human nature was deified and adored, and therefore, as we have already pointed out, Pity and Shame and Energy and Rumour, the last indeed the most fitting and significant of them all for a people who simply lived to talk, found spirits willing to prostrate themselves in their service and altars dedicated to their honour. The philosophers heard this new Jewish teacher proclaiming the virtues and blessings of Jesus and the Resurrection, and they concluded Jesus to be one divinity and the Resurrection another divinity, lately imported from the mysterious East. The philosophers were the aristocracy of the Athenian city, revered as the University professors in a German or Scotch town, and they at once brought the new-comer before the court of Areopagus, the highest in Athens, charged, as in the time of Socrates, with the duty of supervising the affairs of the national



religion, and punishing all attacks and innovations thereon. The Apostle was led up the steps or stairs which still remain, the judges took their places on the rock-hewn benches, St. Paul was placed upon the defendant's stone, called, as Pausanias tells us, the Stone of Impudence, and then the trial began.

The Athenian philosophers were cultured, and they were polite. They demand, therefore, in bland tones, "May we know what this new teaching is, which is spoken by thee? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears; we would know, therefore, what these things mean." And now St. Paul has got his chance of a listening audience. He has come across a new type of hearers, such as he has not enjoyed since those early days of his first Christian love, when, after his escape from Jerusalem, he resided at the university city of Tarsus for a long time, till sought out by Barnabas to come and minister to the crowds of Gentiles who were flocking into the Church at Antioch.<sup>1</sup> St. Paul knew right well the tenets of the two classes of men, the Stoics and the Epicureans, with whom he had to contend, and he deals with them effectually in the speech which he delivered before the court. Of that address we have only the barest outline. The report given in the Acts contains about two hundred and fifty words, and must have lasted little more than two minutes if that was all St. Paul said. It embodies, however, merely the leading arguments used by the Apostle as Timothy or some other disciple recollected them and told them to St. Luke. Let us see what

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<sup>1</sup> That period of retirement at Tarsus may have been utilised by St. Paul in studying classical literature and Greek philosophy by way of preparation for that life's work among the Gentiles, to which he was appointed at his conversion.

these arguments were. He begins with a compliment to the Athenians. The Authorised, and even the Revised, Version represent him indeed as beginning like an unskilled and unwise speaker with giving his audience a slap in the face. "Ye men of Athens, in all things I perceive that ye are somewhat superstitious," would not have been the most conciliatory form of address to a keen-witted assembly like that before which he was now standing. It would have tended to set their backs up at once. If we study St. Paul's Epistles, specially his First Epistle to Corinth, we shall find that even when he had to find the most grievous faults with his disciples, he always began like a prudent man by conciliating their feelings, praising them for whatever he could find good or blessed in them. Surely if St. Paul acted thus with believers living unworthy of their heavenly calling, he would be still more careful not to offend men whom he wished to win over to Christ! St. Paul's exordium was complimentary rather than otherwise, bearing out the description which Pausanias gives of the Athenians of his own day, that "they have more than other Greeks, a zeal for religion." Let us expand his thoughts somewhat that we may grasp their force. "Men of Athens, in all things I perceive that ye are more religious and more devoted to the worship of the deity than other men. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, To the unknown God." St. Paul here displays his readiness as a practised orator. He shows his power and readiness to become all things to all men. He seizes upon the excessive devotion of the Athenians. He does not abuse them on account of it, he uses it rather as a good and useful foundation on which he may build a worthier

structure, as a good and sacred principle, hitherto misapplied, but henceforth to be dedicated to a nobler purpose. The circumstance upon which St. Paul seized, the existence of an altar dedicated to the unknown God, is amply confirmed by historic evidence. St. Paul may have noticed such altars as he passed up the road from Phalerum, where he landed, to the city of Athens, where, as we learn from Pausanias, the next-century traveller, such altars existed in his time; or he may have seen them on the very hill of Areopagus on which he was standing, where, from ancient times, as we learn from another writer, altars existed dedicated to the unknown gods who sent a plague upon Athens.<sup>1</sup> St. Paul's argument then was this. The Athenians were already worshippers of the Unknown God. This was the very deity he came proclaiming, and therefore he could not be a setter forth of strange gods nor liable to punishment in consequence. He then proceeds to declare more fully the nature of the Deity hitherto unknown. He was the God that made the world and all things therein. He was not identical therefore with the visible creation as the Pantheism of the Stoics declared,<sup>2</sup> but gave to all out of His own

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<sup>1</sup> There are frequent notices of the altars to the unknown gods in ancient Greek writers: as in Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, vol. i., p. 2 (Shilleto's translation); *Life of Apollonius*, by Philostratus, vi., 3; Lucian's *Philopatris*, 29. See, however, for exhaustive discussions of this point, and the whole subject of the topography of ancient Athens, Lewin's *St. Paul*, vol. i., p. 242; Farrar's *St. Paul*, ch. xxvii., and Conybeare and Howson's *St. Paul*, vol. i., ch. x. Spon and Wheeler were travellers of the seventeenth century, whose works on this subject are important as showing Athens as it existed before modern changes. Some of the reports of travels in Greece, made by eminent scholars in the same century, and now very little known, may be found in the early volumes of the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society.

<sup>2</sup> St. Paul shows that he could sympathise with the true element in

immense fulness life and wealth, and all things ; neither was He like the gods of the Epicureans who sat far aloof from all care and thought about this lower world. St. Paul taught God's personal existence as against the Stoics, and God's providence as against the Epicureans. Then he struck straight at the root of that national pride, that supreme contempt for the outside barbaric world, which existed as strongly among these cultured agnostic Greek philosophers as among the most narrow, fanatical, and bigoted Jews: "He made of one every nation of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation ; that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him." A doctrine which must have sounded exceeding strange to these Greeks accustomed to despise the barbarian world, looking down upon it from the height of their learning and civilisation, and regarding themselves as the only favourites of Heaven. St. Paul proclaims on the Hill of Mars Christian liberalism, the catholic and cosmopolitan character of the true religion in opposition to this Greek contempt grounded on mere human position and privilege, as clearly and as loudly as he proclaimed the same great truth at Jerusalem or in the synagogues of the Dispersion in opposition to Jewish exclusiveness grounded on the Divine covenant. St. Paul had grasped the great lesson taught by the prophets of the Old Testament as they prophesied concerning Babylon, Egypt, and Tyre. They proclaimed the lesson which Jewish ears were slow to learn, they taught the Jews the truth which Paul preached to the

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pantheistic stoicism by his famous words which have a certain pantheistic ring, but still a very different one from that of the Stoics: "In Him we live and move and have our being."

philosophers of Athens, they acted upon the principle which it was the great work of Paul's life to exemplify, that God's care and love and providence are over all His works, that His mercies are not restrained to any one nation, but that, having made of one all nations upon the face of the earth, His blessings are bestowed upon them all alike. This truth here taught by St. Paul has been slow to make its way. Men have been slow to acknowledge the equality of all nations in God's sight, very slow to give up their own claims to exceptional treatment and blessing on the part of the Almighty. The great principle enunciated by the Apostle struck, for instance, at the evil of slavery, yet how slowly it made its way. Till thirty years ago really good and pious men saw nothing inconsistent with Christianity in negro slavery. Christian communions even were established grounded on this fundamental principle, the righteous character of slavery. John Newton was a slave trader, and seems to have seen nothing wrong in it. George Whitfield owned slaves, and bequeathed them as part of his property to be held for his Orphan House in America. But it is not only slavery that this great principle overthrows. It strikes down every form of injustice and wrong. God has made all men of one; they are all equally His care, and therefore every act of injustice is a violation of the Divine law which is thus expressed. Such ideas must have seemed exceedingly strange, and even unnatural to men accustomed to reverence the teaching and study the writings of guides like Aristotle, whose dogma was that slavery was based on the very constitution of nature itself which formed some men to rule and others to be slaves.

St. Paul does not finish with this. He has not yet

exhausted all his message. He had now dealt with the intellectual errors and mistakes of his hearers. He had around him and above him, if he could but see the magnificent figure of Athene, the pride and glory of the Acropolis, with its surrounding temples, the most striking proofs how their intellectual mistakes had led the wise of this world into fatal and degrading practices. In the course of his argument, having shown the nearness of God to man, "In Him we live and move and have our being," and the Divine desire that man should seek after and know God, he quoted a passage common to several well-known poets, "For we are also His offspring:"<sup>1</sup> This was sufficient for St. Paul, who as we see, in all his Epistles, often flies off at a tangent when a word slips as it were by chance from his pen, leading him off to a new train of ideas. We are the offspring of God. How is it then that men can conceive the Godhead, that which is Divine, to be like unto those gold and silver, brass or marble statues, even though wrought with the greatest possible skill. The philosophers indeed pretended to distinguish between the Eternal Godhead and these divinities and images innumerable, which were but representa-

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<sup>1</sup> These words are directly and literally taken out of the *Phænomena* of Aratus, a Greek poet of Cilicia and a fellow-countryman of the orator. He was absolutely correct, however, in saying "certain of your own poets," as the same sentiment is found in a hymn to Jupiter, composed by the Stoic philosopher and poet Cleanthes, a poem which will be found with a Latin version in Cudworth's *Intellectual System*. Cleanthes was the immediate successor of Zeno, the founder of Stoicism. His words therefore would have the more weight with his disciples three centuries later. He died, like a Stoic, of hunger, aged eighty, and a statue was erected to him by the Roman Senate in his native place Assos, a town of Æolis in Greece. See for more about Cleanthes and Aratus, Fabricius, *Bibliotheca Græca*, or Smith's *Dict. Greek and Rom. Biog.*



tions of his several characteristics and attributes. But even if they distinguished intellectually, they did not distinguish in practice, and the people from the highest to the lowest identified the idol with the deity itself, and rendered thereto the honour due to God.<sup>1</sup>

St. Paul then proceeds to enunciate his own doctrines. He lightly touches upon, as he did previously at Lystra (ch. xiv. 16), a subject which neither the time at his disposal nor the position of his hearers would permit him to discuss. He glances at, but does not attempt to explain, why God had postponed to that late date this novel teaching: "The times of ignorance God overlooked; but now He commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent." This doctrine of repentance, involving a sense of sin and sorrow for it, must have sounded exceeding strange to those philosophic ears, as did the announcement with which the Apostle follows it up, the proclamation of a future judgment by a Man whom God had ordained for the purpose, and authenticated by raising him from the dead. Here the crowd interrupted him. The Resurrection, or Anastasis, which Paul preached was not then a new deity, but an impossible process through which no man save in fable had ever passed. When the Apostle got thus far the assembly broke up. The idea of a resurrection of a dead man was too much for them. It was too ludicrous for belief. "Some mocked: but others said, We will hear thee again of this matter," and thus ended St. Paul's address, and thus ended too the Athenian opportunity, for St. Paul soon passed away from such a

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<sup>1</sup> As it was with the ancient image worshippers, so is it with the modern. The excuses made for the pagans in ancient times are exactly the same as those made for the image worshippers of the eighth and later centuries: see the article on Iconoclasm in the *Dict. Christ. Biog.*



society of learned triflers and scoffers. They sat in the seat of the scorner, and the seat of the scorner is never a good one for a learner to occupy who wishes to profit. He felt that he had no great work to do in such a place. His opportunity lay where hearts were broken with sin and sorrow, where the burden of life weighed upon the soul, and men heavy laden and sore pressed were longing for real deliverance and for a higher, nobler life than the world could offer. His work, however, was not all in vain, nor were his personal discussions and his public address devoid of results. The Church of Athens was one of those which could look back to St. Paul as its founder. "Not many wise after the flesh were called" in that city of wisdom and beauty, but some were called, among whom was one of those very judges who sat to investigate the Apostle's teaching: "But certain clave unto him, and believed: among whom also was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them." And this Church thus founded became famous; Dionysius the Areopagite became afterwards a celebrated man, because his name was attached some five centuries later to a notorious forgery which has played no small part in later Christian history.<sup>1</sup> Dionysius was

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<sup>1</sup> Few biblical characters have been so surrounded with a haze of fable as Dionysius the Areopagite. All that we certainly know about him is from this passage in the Acts, and from two notices by Eusebius, *H. E.*, iii. 4, and iv. 23. In the *Acta Sanctorum* the Bollandists bestow an immense quantity of space on Dionysius and the literature of the subject under the date Oct. 9th, in their Fourth Volume for October, pp. 696-987. The name of Dionysius became specially celebrated when about the year 500 it was attached to an impudent forgery called the *Heavenly Hierarchy*, from which has been largely derived the modern Roman doctrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, and which has also exercised a great influence on the development of modern pan-

the first bishop of the Athenian Church according to the testimony of another Dionysius, Bishop of Corinth, who lived in the middle of the second century, while persons were yet living who could remember the Areopagite. He was succeeded by Publius, who presided over the Church at an important period of its existence. The Emperor Hadrian came to Athens, and was charmed with it about the year 125 A.D. At that time the Athenian Church must have included among its members several learned men; for the two earliest *Apologies* in defence of Christianity were produced by it. The Athenian Church had just then been purified by the fiery trials of persecution. Quadratus and Aristides stood forth to plead its cause before the Emperor.<sup>1</sup> Of Quadratus and his work we know but

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theism: see the article on Dionysius in vol. i. of Smith's *Dict. Christ. Biog.* Johannes Scotus Erigena, an Irish scholar of the ninth century, was the only man in France found capable of translating these Greek works when brought to Western Europe from the East: see *Vett. Epistt. Hibernic. Sylloge*, xxii., xxiii., xxiv., in Ussher's Works (Ed. Elrington), iv. 474-87. Dionysius is commemorated on Oct. 3rd in the ancient Latin Martyrologies, on Oct. 9th in the modern Roman Martyrology. The ancient Martyrologies—the ancient Roman, Ado's, Usuard's—have a curious notice stating that Aristides the Athenian, in a work which he wrote about the Christian religion, described the martyrdom of Dionysius in the reign of Hadrian. There is no notice of this in the *Apology* of Aristides which has lately come to light. A curious story is told in one of his alleged letters, addressed to Polycarp. Apollophanes, a pagan sophist, was attacking Polycarp about Christianity. Dionysius tells Polycarp to remind his opponent of the miraculous darkness on the day of Crucifixion which Dionysius and Apollophanes had seen at Hierapolis, where they were then both students, when Dionysius said, "Either the God of nature suffers, or the world is in process of dissolution."

<sup>1</sup> The visits of the Emperor Hadrian to Athens, and his delight in that city, have been confirmed by the latest antiquarian investigations in the region of coins and inscriptions. The student who wishes to make acquaintance with the evidence on this point, which has an important

little. Eusebius, the great Church historian, had, however, seen it, and gives us (*H. E.*, iv. 3) a brief abstract of it, appealing to the miracles of our Saviour, and stating that some of the dead whom Christ had raised had lived to his own time. While as for Aristides, the other apologist, his work, after lying hidden from the sight of Christendom, was printed and published last year, as we have told in the former volume of this commentary. That *Apology* of Aristides has much important teaching for us, as we have there tried to show. There is one point, however, to which we did not allude. The *Apology* of Aristides shows us that the Athenian Church accepted in the fullest degree and preserved the great Pauline doctrine of the freedom and catholic nature of Christianity. In the year 125 Judaism and Christianity were still struggling together within the Church in other places; but at Athens they had clean separated the one from the other. Till that year no one but a circumcised Jewish Christian had ever presided over the Mother Church of Jerusalem, which sixty years after the martyrdom of St. Peter and St. Paul preserved exactly the same attitude as in the days

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bearing upon the historic proof of our holy religion, should consult the learned treatise of Julius Dürr, styled, *Die Reisen der Kaisers Hadrian*, (Vienna, 1881). It minutely investigates the records of Hadrian's life, and shows us that Hadrian visited and lived at Athens in A.D. 125. This work was published ten years before the *Apology* of the Athenian Christian Aristides was discovered, serving to illustrate its history from an independent point of view. I have endeavoured to set forth the bearing of this point at greater length than I can now bestow upon it in a series of papers on the *Apology* of Aristides in the *Sunday at Home* for 1891-2. Mrs. Rendal Harris, the wife of the discoverer of it, has published an interesting work on this *Apology*, to which I would refer the reader (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1892). The *Apology* itself was published in 1891, in the series called *Cambridge Texts and Studies*.

of James the Just.<sup>1</sup> The Church of Athens, on the other hand, as a thoroughly Gentile Church, had from the first enjoyed the ministry of Dionysius the Areopagite, a Gentile of culture and education. He had been attracted by the broad liberal teaching of the Apostle in his address upon Mars' Hill, enunciating a religion free from all narrow national limitations. He embraced this catholic teaching with his whole heart, and transmitted it to his successors, so that when some seventy years later a learned Athenian stood forth in the person of Aristides, to explain the doctrines of the Church, contrasting them with the errors and mistakes of all other nations, Aristides does not spare even the Jews. He praises them indeed when compared with the pagans, who had erred on the primary questions of morals; but he blames them because they had not reached the final and absolute position occupied by the Christians. Listen to the words of Aristides which proclaim the true Pauline doctrine taught in St. Paul's sermons, re-echoed by the Epistles, "Nevertheless the Jews too have gone astray from accurate knowledge, and they suppose in their minds that they are serving God, but in the methods of their service, their service is to angels and not to God, in that they observe Sabbaths and new moons, and the passover, and the great fast, and the fast and circumcision, and cleanness of meats," words which sound exactly the same note and embody the same conception as St. Paul in his indignant language to

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<sup>1</sup> The testimony of Eusebius, *H. E.*, iv. 5, is express on this point: "Down to the siege of the Jews under Hadrian there were fifteen bishops in the Church of Jerusalem, all of whom, as they say, were Hebrews from the first, and received the genuine knowledge of Christ, so that in the estimation of those able to judge they were counted worthy of the episcopal office."

the Galatians (iv. 9-11): "Now that ye have come to know God, or rather to be known of God, how turn ye back again to the weak and beggarly elements, wherunto ye desire to be in bondage over again? Ye observe days, and months, and seasons, and years. I am afraid of you, lest by any means I have bestowed labour upon you in vain."<sup>1</sup>

St. Paul did not stay long at Athens. Five or six weeks perhaps, two months at most, was probably the length of his visit, time enough just for his Berean guides to go back to their own city two hundred miles away, and forward their message to Thessalonica fifty miles distant, desiring Timothy and Silas to come to him. Timothy, doubtless, soon started upon his way, tarried with the Apostle for a little, and then returned to Thessalonica, as we learn from 1 Thess. iii. 1: "When we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone, and sent Timothy to establish you and comfort you." And now he was again all alone in that scoffing city where neither the religious, moral, nor intellectual atmosphere could have been pleasing to a man like St. Paul. He quitted Athens therefore and came to Corinth. In that city he laboured for a period of a year and a half at least; and yet the record of his brief visit to Athens, unsuccessful as it was so far as immediate results are concerned, is

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<sup>1</sup> The whole subject of the origin and history of the primitive Church of Athens has been minutely investigated by a modern French scholar, C. Bayet, a member of the French school of antiquaries at Athens. The title of his book, to which I have already referred, is *De Titulis Atticæ Christianis Antiquissimis Commentatio* (Thorin: Paris, 1878). He gives a large number of primitive Christian and Jewish inscriptions found at Athens. The above quotation from Aristides will be found in Rendal Harris's edition, p. 48, in the Cambridge *Texts and Studies*.

much longer than the record of his prolonged work in Corinth.

Now if we were writing a life of St. Paul instead of a commentary on the history told us in the Acts, we should be able to supplement the brief narrative of the historical book with the ample details contained in the Epistles of St. Paul, especially the two Epistles written to Corinth itself, which illustrate the life of the Apostle, his work at Corinth, and the state of the Corinthians themselves prior and subsequent to their conversion. A consideration of these points would, however, lead me to intrude on the sphere of the commentator on the Corinthian Epistles, and demand an amount of space which we cannot afford. In addition, the three great biographies of St. Paul to which we have so often referred—Lewin's, Farrar's, and that of Conybeare and Howson—treat this subject at such great length and with such a profusion of archæological learning as practically leave a fresh writer nothing new to say in this direction. Let us, however, look briefly at the record in the Acts of St. Paul's work in Corinth, viewing it from the expositor's point of view. St. Paul went from Athens to Corinth discouraged, it may have been, by the results of his Athenian labours. Opposition never frightened St. Paul; but learned carelessness, haughty contemptuous indifference to his Divine message, the outcome of a spirit devoid of any true spiritual life, quenched his ardour, chilled his enthusiasm. He must indeed have been sorely repelled by Athens when he set out all alone for the great capital of Achaia, the wicked, immoral, debased city of Corinth. When he came thither he united himself with Aquila, a Jew of Pontus, and Priscilla his wife, because they were members of the same craft. They had been lately expelled from Rome, and, like the Apostle, were tent-



makers: for convenience' sake therefore, and to save expense, they all lodged together.<sup>1</sup> Here again St. Paul experienced the wisdom of his father's training and of the Rabbinical law, which thus made him in Corinth, as before in Thessalonica, thoroughly independent of all external circumstances, and able with his own hands to minister to his body's wants. And it was a fortunate thing too for the gospel's sake that he was able to do so. St. Paul never permits any one to think for a moment that the claim of Christ's ministry for a fitting support is a doubtful one. He expressly teaches again and again, as in 1 Cor. ix., that it is the Scriptural as well as rational duty of the people to contribute according to their means to the maintenance of Christ's public ministry. But there were certain circumstances at Thessalonica, and above all at Corinth, which made St. Paul waive his just claim and even cramp, limit, and confine his exertions, by imposing on himself the work of earning his daily food. Thessalonica and Corinth had immense Jewish populations. The Jews were notorious in that age as furnishing the greatest number of impostors, quack magicians and every other kind of agency which traded upon human credulity for the

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<sup>1</sup> This expulsion of the Jews from Rome by Claudius, which in the providence of God brought Aquila and Priscilla into contact with St. Paul, is mentioned by the Roman historian Suetonius, *Claudius*, 25, in the following suggestive words: "He expelled the Jews who were continually creating tumults, Chestus impelling them." The tumults roused by the teaching of Christian doctrine, like those in the Thessalonian and Berean synagogues, were evidently the origin of the edict. Aquila and Priscilla were constant travellers, and seem to have been influential Christians. We find them afterwards at Ephesus, where they tarried some time: see Acts xviii. 18, 19, 26; 1 Cor. xvi. 19; and subsequently 2 Tim. iv. 19. They also lived at Rome for a period between their two residences at Ephesus, as we learn from the fact that St. Paul sends a salutation to them in Romans xvi. 3, 4.



purposes of gain. St. Paul was determined that neither Jew nor Gentile in either place should be able to hinder the work of the gospel by accusing him of self-seeking or covetous purposes. For this purpose he united with Aquila and Priscilla in working at their common trade as tentmakers, employing the Sabbath days in debating after his usual fashion in the Jewish synagogues; and upon ordinary days improving the hours during which his hands laboured upon the coarse hair cloth of which tents were made, either in expounding to his fellow-workmen the glorious news which he proclaimed or else in meditating upon the trials of his converts in Macedonia, or perhaps, most of all, in that perpetual communion with God, that never-ceasing intercession for which he ever found room and time in the secret chambers of the soul. St. Paul's intercessions as we read of them in his Epistles were immense. Intercessory prayers for his individual converts are frequently mentioned by him. It would have been impossible for a man so hard pressed with labours of every kind temporal and spiritual to find place for them all in formal prayers if St. Paul did not cultivate the habit of ceaseless communion with his Father in heaven, perpetually bringing before God those cases and persons which lay dearest to his heart. This habit of secret prayer must be the explanation of St. Paul's widespread intercessions, and for this reason. He commends the same practice again and again to his converts. "Pray without ceasing" is his language to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. v. 17). Now this could not mean, prolong your private devotions to an inordinate length, because great numbers of his converts were slaves who were not masters of their time. But it does mean cultivate a perpetual sense of God's presence and of your own

communion with Him, which will turn life and its busiest work into a season of refreshing prayer and untiring intercession.

Meanwhile, according to Acts xviii. 5, Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, bringing contributions for the Apostle's support, which enabled him to fling himself entirely into ministerial and evangelistic work. This renewed activity soon told. St. Paul had no longer to complain of contemptuous or listless conduct, as at Athens. He experienced at Jewish hands in Corinth exactly the same treatment as at Thessalonica and Berœa. Paul preached that Jesus was the Christ. The Jews blasphemed Him, and called Him accursed. Their attitude became so threatening that Paul was at length compelled to retire from the synagogue, and, separating his disciples, Jews and Gentiles alike, he withdrew to the house of one Justus, a man whose Latin name bespeaks his Western origin, who lived next door to the synagogue. Thenceforth he threw himself with all his energy into his work. God too directly encouraged him. The very proximity of the Christian Church to the Jewish Synagogue constituted a special danger to himself personally when he had to deal with fanatical Jews. A heavenly visitor appeared, therefore, to refresh the wearied saint. In his hour of danger and of weakness God's strength and grace were perfected, and assurance was granted that the Lord had much people in the city of Corinth, and that no harm should happen to him while striving to seek out and gather God's sheep that were scattered abroad in the midst of the naughty world of Corinthian life. And the secret vision did not stand alone. External circumstances lent their assistance and support. Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and his family became converts,

and were baptized. Gaius and Stephanas were important converts gathered from amongst the Gentiles ; so important indeed were these three individuals and their families that St. Paul turned aside from his purely evangelistic and missionary labours and devoted himself to the pastoral work of preparing them for baptism administering personally that holy sacrament, a duty which he usually left to his assistants, who were not so well qualified for the rough pioneer efforts of controversy, which he had marked out for himself.<sup>1</sup> And so the work went on for a year and a half, till the Jews thought they saw their opportunity for crushing the audacious apostate who was thus making havoc even among the officials of their own organisation, inducing them to join his Nazarene synagogue.<sup>2</sup> Achaia, of which Corinth was the capital, was a Roman province, embracing, broadly speaking, the territory comprised in the modern kingdom of Greece. Like a great many other

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<sup>1</sup> See I Cor. i. 14-17 : " I thank God that I baptized none of you, save Crispus and Gaius ; lest any man should say that ye were baptized into my name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas : besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel." I have often heard a very wrong conclusion drawn from this passage. People think that St. Paul was here casting a certain slight upon baptism as contrasted with preaching. His meaning, however, is evident to any one who will realise the circumstances. The Corinthians were breaking up into sects, calling themselves by the names of various Christian leaders. St. Paul thanks God that very few can call themselves by his name, as they had not even the poor excuse for doing so, which his officiating at their baptism might give. To him, in God's providence, had been assigned the rough, dangerous pioneer work of preaching to the adversaries, Jews and pagans, outside the Church ; to others the work of introducing the converts made by him into the Mystical Body of Christ.

<sup>2</sup> In vol. i., p. 270, I have pointed out that in Corinth the Christians probably adopted, not only the name, but the organisation of the synagogues.

provinces, and specially like Cyprus, to which we have already called attention, Achaia was at times an imperial, at times a senatorial province. Forty years earlier it was an imperial province. The Acts describes it as just then, that is, about A.D. 53, a senatorial or proconsular province; and Suetonius, an independent Roman historian, confirms this, telling us (*Claud.*, 25) that the Emperor Claudius restored it to the senate.

Gallio, a brother of the celebrated philosophic writer Seneca, had been sent to it as proconsul, and the Jews thought they now saw their opportunity. Gallio, whose original and proper name was Annæus Novatus, was a man distinguished by what in Rome was considered his sweet, gentle, and loving disposition. His reputation may have preceded him, and the Jews of Corinth may have thought that they would play upon his easy-going temper. The Jews, being a very numerous community at Corinth, had it of course in their power to prove very unpleasant to any ruler, and specially to one of Gallio's reputed temper.<sup>1</sup> The Roman governors were invested with tremendous powers; they were absolute despots, in fact, for the time being, and yet they were often very anxious to gain popularity, especially with any troublesome body of their temporary subjects. The Roman proconsuls, in fact, adopted a principle we sometimes see still acted out in political life, as if it were the highest type of statesmanship. They were anxious to gain popularity by gratifying those who made themselves specially obnoxious and raised the loudest cries. They petted the naughty, and they neglected the good. So it was with Pontius Pilate, who perpetrated

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<sup>1</sup> Cicero, in his oration *Pro Flacco*, ch. xxviii., shows how troublesome and dangerous, even to the very highest persons, the Jews at Rome could be one hundred years earlier than Gallio's day.

a judicial murder because it contented the multitude ; so it was with Festus, who left an innocent man in bonds at Cæsarea because he desired to gain favour with the Jews ; and so too, thought the Jews of Corinth, it would be with Gallio. They arrested the Apostle, therefore, using the messengers of the synagogue for the purpose, and brought him to the proconsular court, where they set him before the bema, or elevated platform, whence the Roman magistrates dispensed justice. Then they laid their formal accusation against him : "This man persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law" ; expecting perhaps that he would be remitted by the proconsul to the judgment and discipline of their own domestic tribunal, even as Pilate said to the Jews about our Lord and their accusation against Him : "Take ye Him, and judge Him according to your law." But the philosophic brother of the Stoic Seneca had a profound contempt for these agitating Jews. His Stoic education too had trained him to allow external things as little influence upon the mind as possible. The philosophic apathy which the Stoics cultivated must have more or less affected his whole nature, as he soon showed the Jews ; for before the Apostle had time to reply to the charge Gallio burst in contemptuously. If it were a matter of law and order, he declares, it would be right to attend to it ; but if your complaint is touching your own national law and customs I will have nothing to say to it. And then he commanded his lictors to clear the court. Thus ended the attempt on St. Paul's freedom or life, an attempt which was indeed more disastrous to the Jews themselves than to any one else ; for the Gentile mob of Corinth, hating the Jews, and glad to see them balked of their expected prey, seized the chief accuser

Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment-seat; while Gallio all the while cared for none of these things, despising the mob, Jew and Gentile alike, and contemptuously pitying them from the height of his philosophic self-contentment. Gallio has been at all times regarded as the type of the mere worldling, who, wrapped in material interests, cares for nothing higher or nobler. But this is scarcely fair to Gallio. The Stoic philosopher was not dead to better things. But he is the type rather of men who, blinded by lower truths and mere intellectual wisdom, are thereby rendered careless of those spiritual matters in which the soul's true life alone consists. He had so thoroughly cultivated a philosophic contempt for the outside world and its business, the sayings and doings, the joys and the sorrows of the puny mortals who fume and strut and fret their lives away upon this earthly stage, that he lost the opportunity of hearing from the Apostle's lips of a grander philosophy, a deeper contentment, of a truer, more satisfying peace than was ever dreamt of in stoical speculation. And this type of man is not extinct. Philosophy, science, art, literature, politics, they are all great facts, all offer vast fields for human activity, and all may serve for a time so thoroughly to content and satisfy man's inner being as to render him careless of that life in Christ which alone abideth for evermore.

The attempt of the Jews marked the termination of St. Paul's work in Corinth. It was at least the beginning of the end. He had now laboured longer in Corinth than anywhere else since he started out from Antioch. He had organised and consolidated the Church, as we can see from his Corinthian Epistles and now he longed once more to visit his old friends,

and report what God had wrought by his means during his long absence. He tarried, therefore, yet a while, visiting doubtless the various Churches which he had established throughout all the province of Achaia, and then, accompanied by a few companions, set sail for Syria, to declare the results of his eventful mission, taking Ephesus on his way. This was his first visit to that great city, and he was probably led to pay it owing to the commercial necessities of Aquila. Life's actions and deeds, even in the case of an apostle, are moulded by very little things. A glance, a chance word, a passing courtesy, forgotten as soon as done, and life is very different from what it otherwise would have been. And so, too, the tent-making and tent-selling of Aquila brought Paul to Ephesus, shaped the remainder of his career, and endowed the Church with the rich spiritual heritage of the teaching imparted to the Ephesian disciples by word and epistle.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### *THE EPHESIAN CHURCH AND ITS FOUNDATION.*

“Paul, and with him Priscilla and Aquila, came to Ephesus, and he left them here: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews. And when they asked him to abide a longer time, he consented not; but taking his leave of them, and saying, I will return again unto you, if God will, he set sail from Ephesus. . . . Now a certain man named Apollos, an Alexandrian by race, a learned man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spake and taught carefully the things concerning Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John: and he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more carefully.”—ACTS xviii. 19-21, 24-26.

“And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper country, came to Ephesus.”—ACTS xix. 1.

EPHESUS has been from very ancient times a distinguished city. It was famous in the religious history of Asia Minor in times long prior to the Christian Era. It was celebrated at the time of the Roman Empire as the chief seat of the worship of Diana and of the magical practices associated with that worship; and Ephesus became more celebrated still in Christian times as the city where one of the great Œcumenical Councils was held which served to determine the expression of the Church's faith in her Divine Lord and Master. It must then be of great interest to the

Christian student to note the first beginnings of such a vast transformation as that whereby a chief seat of pagan idolatry was turned into a special stronghold of Christian orthodoxy. Let us then devote this chapter to tracing the upgrowth of the Ephesian Church, and to noting the lessons the modern Church may derive therefrom.

St. Paul terminated his work in Corinth some time about the middle or towards the close of the year 53 A.D. In the early summer of that year Gallio came as proconsul to Achaia, and the Jewish riot was raised. After a due interval, to show that he was not driven out by Jewish machinations, St. Paul determined to return once more to Jerusalem and Antioch, which he had left some four years at least before. He went down therefore to Cenchreæ, the port of departure for passengers going from Corinth to Ephesus, Asia Minor, and Syria. A Christian Church had been established there by the exertions of St. Paul or some of his Corinthian disciples. As soon as an early Christian was turned from sin to righteousness, from the adoration of idols to the worship of the true God, he began to try and do something for Him whose love and grace he had experienced. It was no wonder that the Church then spread rapidly when all its individual members were instinct with life, and every one considered himself personally responsible to labour diligently for God. The Church of Cenchreæ was elaborately organised. It had not only its deacons, it had also its deaconesses, one of whom, Phœbe, was specially kind and useful to St. Paul upon his visits to that busy seaport, and is by him commended to the help and care of the Roman Church (Rom. xvi. 1, 2).

From Cenchreæ St. Paul, Aquila, and Priscilla sailed

for Ephesus, where, as we have already hinted, it is most likely the latter pair had some special business avocations which led them to stay at that city. They may have been large manufacturers of tents, and have had a branch establishment at Ephesus, which was then a great mercantile emporium for that part of Asia Minor.

An incidental remark of the sacred writer "having shorn his head in Cenchreæ, for he had a vow," has raised a controverted question. Some refer this expression to Aquila, and I think with much the greater probability. It was customary with the Jews at that time when in any special danger to take a temporary Nazarite vow, binding themselves to abstain from wine and from cutting their hair till a certain definite period had elapsed. Then when the fixed date had arrived, the hair was cut off and preserved till it could be burned in the fire of a sacrifice offered up at Jerusalem upon the individual's next visit to the Holy City. The grammatical order of the words naturally refer to Aquila as the maker of this vow; but I cannot agree in one reason urged for this latter theory. Some have argued that it was impossible for Paul to have made this vow; that it would, in fact, have been a return to the bondage of Judaism, which would have been utterly inconsistent on his part. People who argue thus do not understand St. Paul's position with respect to Jewish rites as being things utterly unimportant, and, as such, things which a wise born Jew would do well to observe in order to please his countrymen. If St. Paul made a vow at Corinth it would have been simply an illustration of his own principle, "To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order that I might gain the Jews." But further, I must say that the taking of a vow, though derived from Judaism, need not have

necessarily appeared to St. Paul and the men of his time a purely Jewish ceremony. Vows, in fact, naturally passed over from Judaism to Christianity.<sup>1</sup> Vows, indeed, of this peculiar character, and with this peculiar external sign of long hair, are no longer customary amongst Christians ; but surely special vows cannot be said to have gone out of fashion, when we consider the wide spread of the teetotal movement, with its vows identical in one important element with that of the Nazarites ! But viewing the matter from a still wider standpoint, people, when contending thus, forget what a large part the tradition of ancient customs must have played in the life, manners, and customs of St. Paul. All his early life he was a strict Pharisaic Jew, and down to the end of life his early training must have largely modified his habits. To take but one instance, pork was the common and favourite food of the Romans at this period. Now I am sure that St. Paul would have vigorously resisted all attempts to prevent the Gentile Christians eating bacon or ham ; but I should not be in the least surprised if St. Paul, trained in Pharisaic habits, never once touched a food he had been taught to abhor from his earliest youth. Life is a continuous thing, and the memories of the past are very powerful. We can to this day trace among ourselves

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremy Taylor, in his *Holy Living*, in his chapter on Prayer, has some wise remarks on vows. He includes them under the head of Prayer : " A vow to God is an act of prayer and a great degree and instance of opportunity, and an increase of duty by some new uncommanded instance, or some more eminent degree of duty or frequency of action, or earnestness of spirit in the same. And because it hath pleased God in all ages of the world to admit of intercourse with His servants in the matter of vows, it is not ill advice that we make vows to God in those cases in which we have great need or great danger." He then proceeds to lay down rules and cautions for making vows.

many customs and traditions dating back to the times antecedent to the Reformation, and much farther. The fires still lighted on St. John's Eve throughout Ireland, and once customary in Scotland, are survivals of the times of Druidical paganism in these islands. The ceremonies and social customs of Shrove Tuesday and Hallow E'en are survivals of the rude mirth of our pre-Reformation forefathers, on the nights before a celebrated fast, Ash Wednesday, in one case, before a celebrated feast, All Saints' Day, in the other. Or perhaps I may take another instance more closely analogous still which every reader can verify for himself. The use of the Church of England has to this day a curious instance of the power of tradition as opposed to written law. There is a general rubric placed in the Book of Common Prayer before the first Lord's Prayer. It runs as follows: "Then the minister shall kneel and say the Lord's Prayer with an audible voice; the people also kneeling and repeating it with him, both here, and wheresoever else it is used in Divine Service." This rubric plainly prescribes that clergy and people shall always say the Lord's Prayer conjointly. And yet, let my readers go into any church of the Anglican Communion on Sunday next, I care not what the tone of its theological thought, and observe the first Lord's Prayer used at the beginning of the Communion Service. They will find that this general rubric is universally neglected, and the celebrating priest says the opening Lord's Prayer by himself with no voice of the people raised to accompany him. Now whence comes this universal fact? It is simply an illustration of the strength of tradition. It is a survival of the practice before the Reformation handed down by tradition to the present time, and over-riding a positive and written law. In

the days before the Reformation, as in the Roman Catholic Church of the present day, the opening Dominical or Lord's Prayer in the Mass was said by the priest alone. When the service was translated into English the old custom still prevailed, and has lasted to the present day.<sup>1</sup> This was only human nature, which abhors unnecessary changes, and is intensely conservative of every practice which is linked with the fond memories of the past. This human nature was found strong in St. Paul, as in other men, and it would have argued no moral or spiritual weakness, no desire to play fast and loose with gospel liberties, had he, instead of Aquila, resorted to the old Jewish practice and bound himself by a vow in connexion with some special blessing which he had received, or some special danger he had incurred. When we are studying the Acts we must never forget that Judaism gave the tone and form, the whole outer framework to Christianity, even as England gave the outward shape and form to the constitutions of the United States and her own numberless colonies throughout the world. St. Paul did not invent a brand new religion, as some people think ; he changed as little as possible, so that his own practice and worship must have been to mere pagan eyes exactly the same as that of the Jews, as indeed we might conclude beforehand from the fact that the Roman authorities seem to have viewed the Christians as a mere Jewish sect down to the close of the second century.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Procter on the Common Prayer, p. 212 ; Canon Evan Daniel on the Prayer Book, pp. 87 and 300.

<sup>2</sup> See on this subject of the confusion of Christianity with Judaism by the Romans, Wieseler's *Die Christenverfolgungen der Cäsaren*, pp 1-10.

I. Let us now take a rapid survey of the extensive journey which our book disposes of in very concise fashion. St. Paul and his companions, Aquila and Priscilla, Timothy and Silas, sailed from Cenchreæ to Ephesus, which city up to this seems to have been untouched by Christian influences. St. Paul, in the earlier portion of his second tour, had been prohibited by the Holy Spirit from preaching in Ephesus, or in any portion of the provinces of Asia or Bithynia. Important as the human eye of St. Paul may have viewed them, still the Divine Guide of the Church saw that neither Asia nor Bithynia, with all their magnificent cities, their accumulated wealth, and their political position, were half so important as the cities and provinces of Europe, viewed from the standpoint of the world's conversion. But now the gospel has secured a substantial foothold in Europe, has taken a firm grasp of that imperial race which then ruled the world, and so the Apostle is permitted to visit Ephesus for the first time. He seems to have then paid a mere passing visit to it, lasting perhaps while the ship discharged the portion of her cargo destined for Ephesus. But St. Paul never allowed time to hang heavy on his hands for want of employment. He left Aquila and Priscilla engaged in their mercantile transactions, and, entering himself into the principal synagogue, proceeded to expound his views. These do not seem to have then aroused any opposition; nay, the Jews even went so far as to desire him to tarry longer and open out his doctrines at greater length. We may conclude from this that St. Paul did not remain during this first visit much beyond one Sabbath day. If he had bestowed a second Sabbath day upon the Ephesian synagogue, his ideas and doctrines would have been



made so clear and manifest that the Jews would not have required much further exposition in order to see their drift. St. Paul, after promising a second visit to them, left his old friends and associates, Aquila and his wife, with whom he had lived for nearly two years, at Ephesus, and pushed on to Cæsarea, a town which he must have already well known, and with which he was subsequently destined to make a long and unpleasant acquaintanceship, arriving at Jerusalem in time probably for the Feast of Tabernacles, which was celebrated on September 16th, A.D. 53. Concerning the details of that visit we know nothing. Four years at least must have elapsed since he had seen James and the other venerated heads of the Mother Church. We can imagine then how joyously he would have told them, how eagerly they would have heard the glad story of the wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles through the power of Jesus Christ. After a short sojourn at Jerusalem St. Paul returned back to Cæsarea, and thence went on to Antioch, the original seat of the Gentile mission for the propagation of the faith. After refreshing himself with the kindly offices of fraternal intercourse and conversation at this great Christian centre, where broad liberal sentiment and wide Christian culture, free from any narrow prejudices, must have infused a tone into society far more agreeable to St. Paul than the unprogressive Judaising views which flourished in Jerusalem, St. Paul then determined to set off upon his third great tour, which must have begun at the earliest some time in the spring of A.D. 54, as soon as the snows of winter had passed away and the passes through the Taurus Range into the central regions of Asia Minor had been opened. We know nothing more concerning the extended

journey he took on this occasion. He seems to have avoided towns like Lystra and Derbe, and to have directed his march straight to Galatia, where he had sufficient work to engage all his thought. We have no mention of the names of the particular Churches where he laboured. Ancyra, as it was then called, Angora as it is now named, in all probability demanded St. Paul's attention. If he visited it, he looked as the traveller does still upon the temple dedicated to the deity of Augustus and of Rome, the ruins of which have attracted the notice of every modern antiquary. Glad, however, as we should have been to gratify our curiosity by details like these, we are obliged to content ourselves with the information which St. Luke gives us, that St. Paul "went through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, in order, stablishing all the disciples," leaving us a speaking example of the energising power, the invigorating effects, of a visitation such as St. Paul now conducted, sustaining the weak, arousing the careless, restraining the rash, guiding the whole body of the Church with the counsels of sanctified wisdom and heavenly prudence. Then, after his Phrygian and Galatian work was finished, St. Paul betook himself to a field which he long since desired to occupy, and determined to fulfil the promise made a year previously at least to his Jewish friends of the Ephesian Synagogue.

II. Now we come to the foundation of the Ephesian Church some time in the latter part of the year 54 A.D. Here it may strike some reader as an extraordinary thing that more than twenty years after the Crucifixion Ephesus was as yet totally untouched by the gospel, so that the tidings of salvation were quite a novel sound in the great Asiatic capital. People sometimes

think of the primitive Church as if, after the Day of Pentecost, every individual Christian rushed off to preach in the most distant parts of the world, and that the whole earth was evangelised straight off. They forget the teaching of Christ about the gospel leaven, and leaven never works all on an heap as it were; it is slow, regular, progressive in its operations. The tradition, too, that the apostles did not leave Jerusalem till twelve years after His ascension ought to be a sufficient corrective of this false notion; and though this tradition may not have any considerable historical basis, yet it shows that the primitive Church did not cherish the very modern idea that enormous and immediate successes followed upon the preaching of the gospel after Pentecost, and that the conversion of vast populations at once occurred. The case was exactly contrary. For many a long year nothing at all was done towards the conversion of the Gentile world, and then for many another long year the preaching of the gospel among the Gentiles entirely depended upon St. Paul alone. He was the one evangelist of the Gentiles, and therefore it is no wonder he should have said in 1 Cor. i. 17, "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel." He was the one man fitted to deal with the prejudices, the ignorance, the sensuality, the grossness with which the Gentile world was overspread, and therefore no other work, no matter how important, was to be allowed to interfere with that one task which he alone could perform. This seems to me the explanation of the question which might otherwise cause some difficulty, how was it that the Ephesians, Jews and Gentiles alike, inhabiting this distinguished city, were still in such dire ignorance of the gospel message

twenty years after the Ascension? Now let us come to the story of the circumstances amid which Ephesian Christianity took its rise. St. Paul, as we have already said, paid a passing visit to Ephesus just a year before when going up to Jerusalem, when he seems to have made a considerable impression in the synagogue. He left behind him Aquila and Priscilla, who, with their household, formed a small Christian congregation, meeting doubtless for the celebration of the Lord's Supper in their own house while yet frequenting the stated worship of the synagogue. This we conclude from the following circumstance which is expressly mentioned in Acts xviii. 26. Apollos, a Jew, born in Alexandria, and a learned man, as was natural coming from that great centre of Greek and Oriental culture, came to Ephesus. He had been baptized by some of John's disciples, either at Alexandria or in Palestine. It may very possibly have been at Alexandria. St. John's doctrines and followers may have spread to Alexandria by that time, as we are expressly informed they had been diffused as far as Ephesus (see ch. xix. 1-4). Apollos, when he came to Ephesus, entered, like St. Paul, into the synagogue, and "spake and taught carefully the things concerning Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John." He knew about Jesus Christ, but with an imperfect knowledge such merely as John himself possessed. This man began to speak boldly in the synagogue on the topic of the Messiah whom John had preached. Aquila and Priscilla were present in the synagogue, heard the disputant, recognised his earnestness and his defects, and then, having taken him, expounded to him the way of God more fully, initiating him into the full mysteries of the faith by baptism into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy

Ghost.<sup>1</sup> This incident has an important bearing upon the foundation and development of the Ephesian Church, but it bears more directly still upon the point on which we have been dwelling. Apollos disputed in the synagogues where Aquila and Priscilla heard him, so that

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<sup>1</sup> Meyer, in his Commentary on ch. xix. 5, enunciates the following extraordinary theory about Apollos, which plainly shows that, valuable as may be his textual criticism, his conception of Christian doctrine and of Apostolic Church life is very defective: "We may not infer from this passage that the disciples of John, who passed over to Christianity, were uniformly re-baptized; for in the case of the apostles who passed over from John to Jesus this certainly did not take place; and even as regards Apollos the common opinion that he was baptized by Aquila is purely arbitrary, as in xviii. 26 his instruction in Christianity, and not his baptism, is narrated." Again: "Apollos could dispense with re-baptism, seeing that he, with his fervid spirit, following the references of John to Christ, and the instruction of his teachers, penetrated without any new baptismal consecration into the pneumatic elements of life." Meyer evidently fails to grasp what the sacrament of baptism was, as conceived by St. Paul, and uses the most dangerous line of argument, that from silence, concluding that, because there is no mention of the Christian baptism of Apollos, therefore such a baptism never took place. But this is not all. Meyer's theory cannot possibly explain why baptism was necessary for Cornelius, though he enjoyed the gift of the Holy Ghost, while it was not necessary for Apollos, "who penetrated without any new baptismal consecration into the pneumatic element of life." Meyer says, indeed, that in the whole New Testament there is no example except in xix. 1-5 of the re-baptism of a disciple of John. But then in the Acts and Epistles, where alone we read of the administration of Christian baptism, there are only two examples of the admission of John's disciples. In one case twelve such were admitted, and they were all baptized by Paul's own order. In the case of Apollos there is silence. Surely the sounder conclusion is that Christian baptism was administered there too, though nothing is said about it! As for the apostles not being baptized with Christian baptism, the explanation is not far to seek. Baptism is the reception of a disciple into covenant with Christ through the medium of water. In the case of the apostles this reception took place in person, and not through any medium. In the apostles' case, too, there is another consideration. Meyer's conclusion is simply one *e silentio* even in their case. We know not, however, everything that Christ did as regards His apostles.

they must have been regular worshippers there notwithstanding their Christian profession and their close intercourse with St. Paul for more than eighteen months. After a little time further, Apollos desired to pass over to Greece. The little Christian Church which met at Aquila's house told him of the wonders they had seen and heard in Achaia and of the flourishing state of the Church in Corinth. They gave him letters commendatory to that Church, whither Apollos passed over, and rendered such valuable help that his name a year or two later became one of the watchwords of Corinthian party strife. The way was now prepared for St. Paul's great mission to Ephesus, exceeding in length any mission he had hitherto conducted, surpassing in its duration of three years the time spent even at Corinth itself. His own brief visit of the year before, the visit and work of the Alexandrian Jew, the quiet conversations, the holy lives, the sanctified examples of Aquila and Priscilla, these had done the preliminary work. They had roused expectation, provoked discussion, developed thought. Everything was ready for the great masterful teacher to step upon the ground and complete the work which he had already so auspiciously begun.

I do not propose to discuss the roads by which St. Paul may have travelled through the province of Asia on this eventful visit, nor to discuss the architectural features, or the geographical position of the city of Ephesus. These things I shall leave to the writers who have treated of St. Paul's life. I now confine myself to the notices inserted by St. Luke concerning the Apostle's Ephesian work, and about it I note that upon his arrival St. Paul came in contact with a small congregation of the disciples of John the



Baptist,<sup>1</sup> who had hitherto escaped the notice of the small Church existing at Ephesus. This need not excite our wonder. We are apt to think that because Christianity is now such a dominant element in our own intellectual and religious atmosphere it must always have been the same. Ephesus, too, was then an immense city, with a large population of Jews, who may have had many synagogues. These few disciples of John the Baptist may have worshipped in a synagogue which never heard of the brief visit of a Cilician Jew, a teacher named Saul of Tarsus, much less of the quiet efforts of Aquila and Priscilla, the tentmakers, lately come from Corinth. St. Paul, on his second visit, soon came in contact with these men. He at once asked them a question which tested their position and attainments in the Divine life, and sheds for us a vivid light upon apostolic doctrine and practice. "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?" is plainly an inquiry whether they had enjoyed the blessing connected with the solemn imposition of hands, from which has been derived the rite of confirmation, as I showed in the previous volume. The disciples soon revealed the imperfect character of their religion by their reply:

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<sup>1</sup> The movement instituted by St. John the Baptist was perpetuated into the second century, and in some measure developed into, or connected itself with, the sect subsequently called the Hemerobaptists. The history of this movement from apostolic days is elaborately traced by Bishop Lightfoot in his *Essay on the Essenes*, contained in his *Colossians and Philemon*; see especially pp. 400-407, to which we must refer the reader desirous of more information. The Hemerobaptists are mentioned in the *Clementine Recognitions*, i. 54, the *Clementine Homilies*, ii. 23, which date from about 200 A.D., and in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, vi. 6, which may be put down as a century later. This shows the continuity of the sect. There are still some fragments of it existing in Babylonia, under the name of Mandeans: see further the article "Sabians" in Smith's *Dict. Christ. Biog.*, iv. 569-73.



"Nay, we did not so much as hear whether the Holy Ghost was," words which led St. Paul to demand what in that case was the nature of their baptism. "Into what then were ye baptized?" and they said, "Into John's baptism."

Now the simple explanation of the disciples' ignorance was that they had been baptized with John's baptism, which had no reference to or mention of the Holy Ghost. St. Paul, understanding them to be baptized disciples, could not understand their ignorance of the personal existence and present power of the Holy Ghost, till he learned from them the nature of their baptism, and then his surprise ceased. But then we must observe that the question of the Apostle astonished at their defective state—"Into what then were ye baptized?"—implies that, if baptized with Christian baptism, they would have known of the existence of the Holy Ghost, and therefore further implies that the baptismal formula into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, was of universal application among Christians; for surely if this formula were not universally used by the Church, many Christians might be in exactly the same position as these disciples of John, and never have heard of the Holy Ghost! St. Paul, having expounded the difference between the inchoate, imperfect, beginning knowledge, of the Baptist, and the richer, fuller teaching of Jesus Christ, then handed them over for further preparation to his assistants, by whom, after due fasting and prayer, they were baptized,<sup>2</sup> and at once presented to the Apostle for the imposition

<sup>1</sup> See my remarks on this topic on pp. 141, 142 of my first volume on Acts.

<sup>2</sup> See the *Didache*, or *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, concerning the methods used in preparation for baptism.

of hands ; when the Holy Ghost was vouchsafed in present effects, "they spake with tongues and prophesied," as if to sanction in a special manner the decided action taken by the Apostle on this occasion.

The details concerning this affair, given to us by the sacred writer, are most important. They set forth at greater length and with larger fulness the methods ordinarily used by the Apostle than on other similar occasions. The Philippian jailor was converted and baptized, but we read nothing of the imposition of hands. Dionysius and Damaris, Aquila and Priscilla, and many others at Athens and Corinth, were converted, but there is no mention of either baptism or any other holy rite. It might have been very possible to argue that the silence of the writer implied utter contempt of the sacraments of the gospel and the rite of confirmation on these occasions, were it not that we have this detailed account of the manner in which St. Paul dealt with half-instructed, unbaptized, and unconfirmed disciples of Christ Jesus. They were instructed, baptized, and confirmed, and thus introduced into the fulness of blessing, required by the discipline of the Lord, as ministered by his faithful servant. If this were the routine observed with those who had been taught "carefully the things of Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John," how much more would it have been the case with those rescued out of the pollutions of paganism and called into the kingdom of light !

III. After this favourable beginning, and seeing the borders of the infant Church extended by the union of these twelve disciples, St. Paul, after his usual fashion, flung himself into work amongst the Jews of Ephesus upon whom he had previously made a favourable impression. He was well received for a time. He continued

for three months "reasoning and persuading as to the things concerning the kingdom of God." But, as it was elsewhere, so was it at Ephesus, the offence of the Cross told in the long run upon the worshippers of the synagogue. The original Christian Church was Jewish. Aquila and Priscilla, Apollos and Timothy, and the disciples of John the Baptist would have excited no resentment in the minds of the Jews; but when St. Paul began to open out the hope which lay for Gentiles as well as for Jews in the gospel which he preached, then the objections of the synagogue were multiplied, riots and disturbances became, as elsewhere, matters of daily occurrence, and the opposition became at last so bitter that, as at Corinth, so here again at Ephesus the Apostle was obliged to separate his own followers, and gather them into the school of one Tyrannus, a teacher of philosophy or rhetoric, whom perhaps he had converted, where the blasphemous denunciations against the Divine Way which he taught could no longer be heard.<sup>1</sup> In this school or lecture-hall St. Paul continued labouring for more than two years, bestowing upon the city of Ephesus a longer period of continuous labour than he ever vouchsafed to any place else. We have St. Paul's own statement as to his method of life at this period in the address he subsequently delivered to the elders of Ephesus. The Apostle pursued at Ephesus the same course which he adopted at Corinth in one important direction at least. He supported himself and his immediate companions, Timothy and Sosthenes, by his own labour, and that we may presume for precisely the

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 32, 33 above for some remarks on this title, the Way, used in the Acts for the Gospel Dispensation or the Christian Church. Cf. also ch. ix. 2, xix. 23, xxii. 4, xxiv. 14, and the expression the Way of Life in the *Didache*.

same reason at Ephesus as at Corinth. He desired to cut off all occasion of accusation against himself. Ephesus was a city devoted to commerce and to magic. It was full of impostors too, many of them Jewish, who made gain, out of the names of angels and magical formulæ derived from the pretended wisdom of Solomon handed down to them by secret succession, or derived to them from contact with the lands of the far-distant East. St. Paul determined, therefore, that he would give no opportunity of charging him with trading upon the credulity of his followers, or working with an eye to covetous or dishonest gains. "I coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel. Ye yourselves know that these hands ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me," is the description he gave of the manner in which he discharged his apostolic office in Ephesus, when addressing the elders of that city. We can thus trace St. Paul labouring at his trade as a tentmaker for nearly a period of five years, combining the time spent at Ephesus with that spent at Corinth. Notwithstanding, however, the attention and energy which this exercise of his trade demanded, he found time for enormous evangelistic and pastoral work. In fact, we find St. Paul nowhere else so much occupied with pastoral work as at Ephesus. Elsewhere we see the devoted evangelist, rushing in with the pioneers, breaking down all hindrances, heading the stormers to whom was committed the fiercest struggle, the most deadly conflict, and then at once moving into fresh conflicts, leaving the spoils of victory and the calmer work of peaceful pastoral labours to others. But here in Ephesus we see St. Paul's marvellous power of adaptation. He is at one hour a clever artisan capable of gaining support sufficient for others as well

as for himself; then he is the skilful controversialist "reasoning daily in the school of one Tyrannus"; and then he is the indefatigable pastor of souls "teaching publicly, and from house to house," and "ceasing not to admonish every one night and day with tears."

But this was not all, or nearly all, the burden the Apostle carried. He had to be perpetually on the alert against Jewish plots. We hear nothing directly of Jewish attempts on his life or liberty during the period of just three years which he spent on this prolonged visit. We might be sure, however, from our previous experience of the synagogues, that he must have run no small danger in this direction; but then when we turn to the same address we hear something of them. He is recalling to the minds of the Ephesian elders the circumstances of his life in their community from the beginning, and he therefore appeals thus: "Ye yourselves know from the first day that I set foot in Asia, after what manner I was with you all the time, serving the Lord with all lowliness of mind, and with tears, *and with trials which befell me with plots of the Jews.*" Ephesus again was a great field wherein he personally worked; it was also a great centre for missionary operations which he superintended. It was the capital of the province of Asia, the richest and most important of all the Roman provinces, teeming with resources, abounding in highly civilised and populous cities, connected with one another by an elaborate network of admirably constructed roads. Ephesus was cut out by nature and by art alike as a missionary centre whence the gospel should radiate out into all the surrounding districts. And so it did. "All they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks," is the testimony of St. Luke with respect to

the wondrous progress of the gospel, not in Ephesus alone, but also throughout all the province, a statement which we find corroborated a little lower down in the same nineteenth chapter by the independent testimony of Demetrius the silversmith, who, when he was endeavouring to stir up his fellow-craftsmen to active exertions in defence of their endangered trade, says, "Ye see and hear that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people." St. Paul's disciples laboured, too, in the other cities of Asia, as Epaphras for instance in Colossæ. And St. Paul himself, we may be certain, bestowed the gifts and blessings of his apostolic office by visiting these local Churches, as far as he could consistently with the pressing character of his engagements in Ephesus.<sup>1</sup> But even the superintendence of vast missions throughout the province of Asia did not exhaust the prodigious labours of St. Paul. He perpetually bore about in his bosom anxious thoughts for the welfare, trials, and sorrows of the numerous Churches he had established in Europe and Asia alike. He was constant in prayers for them, mentioning the individual members by name, and he

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<sup>1</sup> Bishop Lightfoot, *Colossians*, Introd., p. 30, has some good remarks bearing on this topic: "How or when the conversion of the Colossians took place we have no direct information. Yet it can hardly be wrong to connect the event with St. Paul's long sojourn at Ephesus. Here he remained preaching for three whole years. It is possible, indeed, that during this period he paid short visits to other neighbouring cities of Asia; but if so, the notices in the Acts oblige us to suppose these interruptions to his residence in Ephesus to have been slight and infrequent. Yet, though the Apostle himself was stationary in the capital, the Apostolic influence and teaching spread far beyond the limits of the city and its immediate neighbourhood. It was hardly an exaggeration when Demetrius declared that 'almost throughout all Asia this Paul had persuaded and turned away much people.' The



was unwearied in keeping up communications with them, either by verbal messages or by written epistles, one specimen of which remains in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, written to them from Ephesus, and showing us the minute care, the comprehensive interest, the intense sympathy which dwelt within his breast with regard to his distant converts all the while that the work at Ephesus, controversial, evangelistic and pastoral, to say nothing at all of his tentmaking, was making the most tremendous demands on body and soul alike, and apparently absorbing all his attention. It is only when we thus realise bit by bit what the weak, delicate, emaciated Apostle must have been doing, that we are able to grasp the full meaning of his own words to the Corinthians: "Besides those things that are without, there is that which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the Churches."

This lengthened period of intense activity of mind and body terminated in an incident which illustrates the peculiar character of St. Paul's Ephesian ministry. Ephesus was a town where the spiritual and moral atmosphere simply reeked with the fumes, ideas, and practices of Oriental paganism, of which magical in-

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sacred historian himself uses equally strong language in describing the effects of the Apostle's preaching: 'All they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.' In accordance with these notices the Apostle himself, in an Epistle written during this sojourn, sends salutations to Corinth, not from the Church of Ephesus specially, as might have been anticipated, but from the 'Churches of Asia' generally (1 Cor. xvi. 19). St. Luke, it should be observed, ascribes this dissemination of the gospel not to journeys undertaken by the Apostle, but to his preaching at Ephesus itself. Thither, as to the metropolis of Western Asia, would flock crowds from all the towns and villages far and near. Thence they would carry away, each to his own neighbourhood, the spiritual treasure which they had so unexpectedly found.'



cantations formed the predominant feature. Magic prevailed all over the pagan world at this time. In Rome, however, magical practices were always more or less under the ban of public opinion, though at times resorted to even by those whose office called upon them to suppress illegal actions. A couple of years before the very time at which we have arrived, workers in magic, among whom were included astrologers, or mathematicians, as the Roman law called them, were banished from Rome simultaneously with the Jews, who always enjoyed an unenviable notoriety for such occult practices.<sup>1</sup> In Asia Minor and the East they flourished at this time under the patronage of religion, and continued to flourish in all the great cities down to Christian times. Christianity itself could not wholly banish magic which retained its hold upon the half-converted Christians who flocked into the Church in crowds during the second half of the fourth century; and we learn from St. Chrysostom himself, that when a young man he had a narrow escape for his life owing to the continuance of magical practices in Antioch, more than three hundred years after St. Paul.<sup>2</sup> It is no wonder that when Diana's worship

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<sup>1</sup> I allude, of course, to the decree of Claudius against the Jews in A.D. 52, to which Suetonius (*Claudius*, 25) and Dio Cassius, lx. 6, refer; cf. Tacitus, *Annals*, xii. 52, and Lewin's *Fasti Sacri*, A.D. 52.

<sup>2</sup> The story is an interesting one. It will be found in Stephens' *Life of St. Chrysostom*, p. 61. The Emperor Valens had discovered that some of his enemies had been endeavouring, through magical contrivances something like table-rapping, to spell out the name of his successor, and had succeeded so far that they had found out the first part of the name as Theod, but the oracle could tell nothing more. The jealous Emperor ordered every prominent man with the names Theodore or Theodosius to be slain, vainly thinking to kill his own successor. He also ordered every one found with magical books in their possession to be at once slain. Chrysostom and a friend were

reigned supreme at Ephesus, magical practices should also flourish there. If, however, there existed a special development of the power of evil at Ephesus, God also bestowed a special manifestation of Divine power in the person and ministry of St. Paul, as St. Luke expressly declares: "God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul, insomuch that unto the sick were carried away from his body handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits departed from them." This passage has been often found a stumbling-block by many persons. They have thought that it has a certain legendary air about it, as they in turn think that there is a certain air of legend about the similar passage in Acts v. 12-16, which makes much the same statement about St. Peter. When writing about this latter passage in my previous volume, p. 230, I offered some suggestions which lessen, if they

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walking in A.D. 374 on the banks of the Orontes when they saw a book floating down the stream. They stretched forth and rescued it, when, seeing that it was a magical book, they at once flung it back into the river, and not a moment too soon, as just then a police officer on detective duty appeared on the scene, from whom a moment earlier they could not have escaped. St. Chrysostom always regarded this as one of the great escapes of his life: see Art. "Chrysostom" in *Dict. Christ. Biog.*, vol. i., p. 520, and his own reference to the escape in his 38th Homily on the Acts, translated in the Oxford Library of the Fathers. Mr. Stephens, *l.c.*, gives an account of the magical rites and their ceremonial, which was doubtless much the same in A.D. 374 as in A.D. 54, whence we take a brief extract: "The twenty-four letters of the alphabet were arranged at intervals round the rim of a kind of charger, which was placed on a tripod consecrated by magic songs and frequent ceremonies. The diviner, habited as a heathen priest, in linen robes, sandals, and with a fillet wreathed about his head, chanted a hymn to Apollo, the god of prophecy, while a ring in the centre of the charger was slipped rapidly round a slender thread. The letters in front of which the ring successively stopped indicated the character of the oracle."

do not quite take away, the difficulty; to these I shall now only refer my readers. But I think we can see a local reason for the peculiar development or manifestation of miraculous power through St. Paul. The devil's seat was just then specially at Ephesus, so far as the great province of Asia was concerned. The powers of evil had concentrated all their force and all their wealth of external grandeur, intellectual cleverness, and spiritual trickery in order to lead men captive; and there God, in order that He might secure a more striking victory for truth upon this magnificent stage, armed His faithful servant with an extraordinary development of the good powers of the world to come, enabling him to work special wonders in the sight of the heathen. Can we not read an echo of the fearful struggle just then waged in the metropolis of Asia in words addressed some years later to the members of the same Church, "For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places"? We make a great mistake when we think of the apostles as working miracles when and as they liked. At times their evangelistic work seems to have been conducted without any extraordinary manifestations, and then at other times, when the power of Satan was specially put forth, God displayed His special strength, enabling His servants to work wonders and signs in His Name. It was much the same as in the Old Testament. The Old Testament miracles will be found to cluster themselves round the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, and its Reformation at the hand of Elijah. So, too, the recorded miracles of the apostles will be found to gather round St. Peter's earlier work in Jerusalem,

where Satan strove to counter-work God's designs in one way, and St. Paul's ministry in Ephesus, where Satan strove to counter-work them in another way. One incident at Ephesus attracted special attention. There was a priestly family, consisting of seven sons, belonging to the Jews at Ephesus. Their father had occupied high position among the various courses which in turn served the Temple, even as Zacharias, the father of the Baptist, did. These men observed the power with which St. Paul dealt with human spirits disordered by the powers of evil, using for that purpose the sacred name of Jesus. They undertook to use the same sacred invocation; but it proved, like the censers of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, a strange fire kindled against their own souls. The man possessed by the evil spirit recognised not their presumptuous efforts, but attacked them, and did them serious bodily injury. This circumstance spread the fame of the man of God wider and wider. The power of magic and of the demons fell before him, even as the image of Dagon fell before the Ark. Many of the nominal believers in Christianity had still retained their magical practices as of yore, even as nominal Christians retained them in the days of St. Chrysostom. The reality of St. Paul's power, demonstrated by the awful example of Sceva's sons, smote them in their inmost conscience. They came, confessed their deeds, brought their magical books together,<sup>1</sup> and gave the greatest proof of their

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<sup>1</sup> The magical books thus consigned to the flames by the Christian believers who practised magic were filled with figures or characters technically called "Ephesian letters," *Γράμματα Ἐφέσια*. These were mystic characters and strange words which were engraven on the crown, zone, and feet of the goddess. Clement of Alexandria discusses their use, and says the Greeks were greatly addicted to them, in his

honest convictions ; for they burned them in the sight of all, and counting the price thereof found it fifty thousand pieces of silver, or more than two thousand pounds of our money. "So mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed" in the very chosen seat of the Ephesian Diana.

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*Stromata*, v. 8, as translated in Clement's works, vol. ii., p. 247, in Clark's Ante-Nicene Library. The same use of curious mystic words passed over to the Manichæans and other secret sects of mediæval times. See also Guhl's *Ephesiaca*, p. 94 (Berlin, 1843), where all the authorities on this curious subject are collected together. Conybeare and Howson, ch. xiv., give them from Guhl in a handy shape. Great quantities of these "Ephesian letters" have been found among the Fayûm Manuscripts discovered in Egypt, which almost universally make a large use of the name Iao or Jehovah, showing their contact with Judaism.

## CHAPTER XV.

### *THE EPHESIAN RIOT AND A PRUDENT TOWN CLERK.*

“About that time there arose no small stir concerning the Way. For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines of Diana, brought no little business unto the craftsmen; whom he gathered together, with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this business we have our wealth. And ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands; and not only is there danger that this our trade come into disrepute; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana be made of no account, and that she should even be deposed from her magnificence, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.”—ACTS xix. 23-8.

ST. PAUL'S labours at Ephesus covered, as he informs us himself, when addressing the elders of that city, a space of three years. The greater portion of that period had now expired, and had been spent in peaceful labours so far as the heathen world and the Roman authorities were concerned. The Jews, indeed, had been very troublesome at times. It is in all probability to them and their plots St. Paul refers when in 1 Cor. xv. 32 he says, “If after the manner of men I fought with beasts at Ephesus, what doth it profit me?” as the unbelieving Gentiles do not seem to have raised any insurrection against his teaching till he felt his work was done, and he was, in fact, preparing to leave Ephesus. Before, however, we proceed to discuss

the startling events which finally decided his immediate departure, we must consider a brief passage which connects the story of Sceva's sons and their impious temerity with that of the silversmith Demetrius and the Ephesian riot.

The incident connected with Sceva's sons led to the triumph over the workers in magic, when the secret professors of that art came and publicly acknowledged their hidden sins, proving their reality by burning the instruments of their wickedness. Here, then, St. Luke inserts a notice which has proved to be of the very greatest importance in the history of the Christian Church. Let us insert it in full that we may see its bearing: "Now after these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome. And having sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while." This passage tells us that St. Paul, after his triumph over the practices of magic, and feeling too that the Church had been effectually cleansed, so far as human foresight and care could effect it, from the corroding effects of the prevalent Ephesian vice, now determined to transfer the scene of his labours to Macedonia and Achaia, wishing to visit those Churches which five years before he had founded. It was full five years, at least, since he had seen the Philippian, Thessalonian, and Berean congregations. Better than three years had elapsed since he had left Corinth, the scene of more prolonged work than he had ever bestowed on any other city except Ephesus. He had heard again and again from all these places, and some of the reports, especially those from Corinth, had been very dis-



quieting. The Apostle wished, therefore, to go and see for himself how the Churches of Christ in Macedonia and Achaia were faring. He next wished to pay a visit to Jerusalem to consult with his brethren, and then felt his destiny pushing him still westwards, desiring to see Rome, the world's capital, and the Church which had sprung up there, of which his friends Priscilla and Aquila must have told him much. Such seems to have been his intentions in the spring of the year 57, to which his three years' sojourn in Ephesus seems now to have brought him.

The interval of time covered by the two verses which I have quoted above is specially interesting, because it was just then that the First Epistle to the Corinthians was written. All the circumstances and all the indications of time which the Epistle itself offers conspire to fix the writing of it to this special date and place. The Epistle, for instance, refers to Timothy as having been already sent into Macedonia and Greece : "For this cause have I sent unto you Timothy, who shall put you in remembrance of my ways which be in Christ" (1 Cor. iv. 17). In Acts xix. 22 we have it stated, "Having sent into Macedonia Timothy and Erastus." The Epistle again plainly tells us the very season of the year in which it was written. The references to the Passover season—"For our passover also hath been sacrificed, even Christ; wherefore let us keep the feast"—are words which naturally were suggested by the actual celebration of the Jewish feast, to a mind like St. Paul's, which readily grasped at every passing allusion or chance incident to illustrate his present teaching. Timothy and Erastus had been despatched in the early spring, as soon as the passes and roads were thoroughly open and navigation established.

The Passover in A.D. 57 happened on April 7th, and the Apostle fixes the exact date of the First Epistle to Corinth, when in the sixteenth chapter and eighth verse he says to the Corinthians, "I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost." I merely refer now to this point to illustrate the vastness of the Apostle's labours, and to call attention to the necessity for comparing together the Acts and the Epistles in the minute manner exemplified by Paley in the *Horæ Paulinæ*, if we wish to gain a complete view of a life like St. Paul's, so completely consecrated to one great purpose.<sup>1</sup>

Man may propose, but even an apostle cannot dispose of his fate as he will, or foretell under ordinary circumstances how the course of events will affect him. St. Paul intended to stay at Ephesus till Pentecost, which that year happened on May 28th. Circumstances however hastened his departure. We have been considering the story of St. Paul's residence in Ephesus, but hitherto we have not heard one word about the great Ephesian deity, Diana, as the Romans called her, or Artemis, as St. Luke, according to the ordinary local use, correctly calls her in the Greek text of the Acts, or Anaitis, as her ancient name had been from early times at Ephesus and throughout Asia Minor.<sup>2</sup> If this riot had not happened, if our attention

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<sup>1</sup> This subject properly belongs to commentators on 1 Corinthians. Paley, in *Horæ Paulinæ*, ch. iii., and Dr. Marcus Dods, in his *Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 104, 105, set forth the evidence in a convenient shape. I may remark that here, as elsewhere, I adopt in the main Mr. Lewin's chronology, as contained in his *Fasti Sacri*. Without pledging myself to agree in all his details, his scheme forms a good working hypothesis, on which a writer can work when composing an expositor's commentary, not one for professed critics or profound scholars.

<sup>2</sup> The student may consult on the identification of Artemis and the

had not been thus called to Diana and her worship, there might have been a total blank in St. Luke's narrative concerning this famous deity, and her equally famous temple, which was at the time one of the wonders of the world. And then some scoffers reading in ancient history concerning the wonders of this temple, and finding the records of modern discoveries confirming the statements of antiquity might have triumphantly pointed to St. Luke's silence about Diana and the Ephesian temple as a proof of his ignorance. A mere passing riot alone has saved us from this difficulty. Now this case well illustrates the danger of arguing from silence. Silence concerning any special point is sometimes used as a proof that a particular writer knew nothing about it. But this is not the sound conclusion. Silence proves in itself nothing more than that the person who is silent either had no occasion to speak upon that point or else thought it wiser or more expedient to hold his tongue. Josephus, for instance, is silent about Christianity; but that is no proof that Christianity did not exist in his time, or that he knew nothing about it. His silence may simply have arisen because he found Christianity an awkward fact, and not knowing how to deal with it he left it alone. It is well to bear this simple law of historical evidence in mind, for a great many of the popular objections to the sacred narratives, both of the Old and New Testaments, are based upon the very dangerous ground of silence alone.<sup>1</sup> Let us, however, return to

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Oriental or Persian deity Anaitis, the *Revue Archéologique* for 1885, vol. ii., pp. 105-115, and Derenbourg and Saglio's *Dict. des Antiq.*, s.v. Diana.

<sup>1</sup> This argument may be pressed further. The silence which we observe in much of second-century literature about the New Testament Canon and Episcopacy is of the same character. The best known and

Diana of the Ephesians. The worship of the goddess Artemis dominated the whole city of Ephesus,<sup>1</sup> and helped to shape the destinies of St. Paul at this season, for while intending to stay at Ephesus till Pentecost at the end of May, the annual celebration of Artemisia, the feast of the patron deity of the city, happened, of which celebration Demetrius took advantage to raise a disturbance which hastened St. Paul's departure into Macedonia.

We have now cleared the way for the consideration of the narrative of the riot, which is full of the most interesting information concerning the progress of the gospel, and offers us the most wonderful instances of the minute accuracy of St. Luke, which again have been illustrated and confirmed in the fullest manner by the researches so abundantly bestowed upon Ephesus within the lifetime of the present generation. Let us take the narrative in the exact order given us by St. Luke: "About that time there arose no small stir about the Way." But why about that special time? We have already said that here we find an indication of the date of the riot. It must have happened during the latter part of April, A.D. 57, and we know that at Ephesus almost the whole month of April, or Artemisius, was dedicated to the honour and worship of Artemis.<sup>2</sup> But here it may be asked, How did it come

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most notorious facts are those about which authors are most apt to be silent when writing for contemporaries, simply because every person acknowledges them and takes them for granted.

<sup>1</sup> This is manifest at once if the reader will consult Mr. Wood's *Ephesus* or Guhl's *Ephesiaca*, a work which, though published (in 1843) before modern discoveries had taught all we now know, is a most elaborate account of ancient Ephesus gleaned out of ancient writers.

<sup>2</sup> See on the exact time of the Macedonian and Ephesian month of Artemisius, Ussher's treatise on the Macedonian and Asiatic solar year,

to pass that Artemis or Diana occupied such a large share in the public worship of Ephesus and the province of Asia? Has modern research confirmed the impression which this chapter leaves upon the mind, that the Ephesian people were above all else devoted to the worship of the deity? The answers to both these queries are not hard to give, and serve to confirm our belief in the honesty and accuracy of the sacred penman. The worship of Artemis, or of Anaïtis rather, prevailed in the peninsula of Asia Minor from the time of Cyrus, who introduced it six or seven centuries before.<sup>1</sup> Anaïtis was the Asiatic deity of fruitfulness, the same as Ashtoreth of the Bible, whom the Greeks soon identified with their own goddess Artemis. Her worship quickly spread, specially through that portion of the country which afterwards became the province of Asia, and through the adjacent districts; showing how rapidly an evil taint introduced into a nation's spiritual life-blood spreads throughout its whole organisation, and when once introduced how persistently it holds its ground; a lesson taught here in New Testa-

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in the seventh volume of his works Ed. Elrington, p. 425, with which may be compared Bishop Lightfoot's *Ignatius*, i. 660-700. Mr. Lewin, in his *Fasti Sacri*, p. 309, makes it the month of May. The Macedonian month Artemisius extended from March 25th to April 24th. This point is further discussed in Lewin's *St. Paul*, vol. i., p. 405. If St. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians at or shortly before April 7th, the date of the Passover, the riot which hastened his departure must have happened within the succeeding fortnight. Boeckh, in the *Corpus of Greek Inscriptions*, No. 2954, inserts a long Greek inscription, found one hundred and seventy years ago at Ephesus, laying down the ceremonial to be observed in honour of the deity throughout the whole month, which Mr. Lewin translates, vol. i., p. 405. See, however, more upon this below.

<sup>1</sup> The Persian language was still used in the worship of Diana at Hierocæsarea and Hypæpa, two well-known towns of the province of Asia in the second century of our era. See Pausanias, v. 27; cf. Tacitus, *Annals*, iii. 62, and Ramsay's *Hist. Geog.*, p. 128.

ment times, as in Old Testament days it was proclaimed in Israel's case by the oft-repeated statement concerning her kings, "Howbeit from the sins of Jeroboam [king after king] departed not." The spiritual life and tone of a nation is a very precious thing, and because it is so the Church of England does well to bestow so much of her public supplication upon those who have power, like Cyrus and Jeroboam, to taint it at the very foundation and origin thereof. When, for instance, St. Paul landed at Perga in Pamphylia, on the first occasion when he visited Asia Minor as a Christian missionary, his eye was saluted with the splendid temple of Diana on the side of the hill beneath which the city was built, and all over the country at every important town similar temples were erected in her honour, where their ruins have been traced by modern travellers.<sup>1</sup> The cult or worship introduced by Cyrus exactly suited the morals and disposition of these Oriental Greeks, and flourished accordingly.

Artemis was esteemed the protectress of the cities where her temples were built, which, as in the case of Ephesus and of Perga, were placed outside the gates like the temple of Jupiter at Lystra, in order that their presence might cast a halo of protection over the adjacent communities. The temple of Diana at Ephesus

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<sup>1</sup> Voluntary associations were formed all over Asia Minor to cultivate the worship of Artemis. Modern research, for instance, has found inscriptions raised by the Xenoï Tekmoreioi indicating their peculiar devotion to Diana and her worship. They specially flourished at a place called Saghîr, near Antioch in Pisidia. It is a curious fact that the cult of the B.V.M. has been substituted for that of Artemis by the Greeks of the neighbourhood, and a feast in her honour is celebrated at the same time as the ancient feast. See *Revue Archéologique*, 1887, vol. i., p. 96; Ramsay, in his *Geography of Asia Minor*, p. 409, and in *Jour. Hell. Studies* for 1883.



was a splendid building. It had been several times destroyed by fire notwithstanding its revered character and the presence of the sacred image,<sup>1</sup> and had been as often rebuilt with greater splendour than before, till the temple was erected existing in St. Paul's day, which justly excited the wonder of mankind, as its splendid ruins have shown, which Mr. Wood has excavated in our own time at the expense of the English Government.<sup>2</sup> The devotion of the Ephesians to this ancient Asiatic deity had even been increasing of late years when St. Paul visited Ephesus, as a decree still exists in its original shape graven in stone exactly as St. Paul must have seen it enacting extended honours to the deity. As this decree bears directly upon the famous riot which Demetrius raised, we insert it here in full, as an interesting confirmation and illustration of the sacred narrative: "To the Ephesian Diana. Forasmuch as it is notorious that not only among the Ephesians, but also everywhere among the Greek nations, temples are consecrated to her, and sacred precincts, and that she hath images and altars dedicated

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<sup>1</sup> The original sacred image, which was preserved inside a screen or curtain in the inmost temple, was a shapeless mass of wood something like the prehistoric blocks of wood or stone which were esteemed at Athens and elsewhere the most venerable images of their favourite deities: see Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, i. 26. The legend at Ephesus was just the same as at Athens and elsewhere, that these prehistoric images had fallen down from heaven. Some of them may have been aerolites.

<sup>2</sup> The temple of Ephesus is depicted in Conybeare and Howson's and Lewin's *St. Paul*, as well as it could have been restored from a study of books. At the time of their publication neither Mr. Wood's discoveries had been made nor his work on Ephesus published. The plans and engravings in Mr. Wood's work of course supersede all others. The plans, etc., in the other works are sufficiently accurate to enable the reader to realise the language of the Acts.



to her on account of her plain manifestations of herself, and that, besides, the greatest token of veneration paid to her, a month is called after her name, by us Artemision, by the Macedonians and other Greek nations and their cities, Artemisius, in which month general gatherings and festivals are celebrated, and more especially in our own city, the nurse of its own, the Ephesian goddess. Now the people of Ephesus deeming it proper that the whole month called by her name should be sacred and set apart to the goddess, have resolved by this decree, that the observation of it by them be altered. Therefore it is enacted, that the whole month Artemision in all the days of it shall be holy, and that throughout the month there shall be a continued celebration of feasts and the Artemisian festivals and the holy days, seeing that the entire month is sacred to the goddess; for from this improvement in her worship our city shall receive additional lustre and enjoy perpetual prosperity.”<sup>1</sup> Now this decree, which preceded St. Paul’s labours perhaps by twenty years or more, has an important bearing on our subject. St. Luke tells us that “about this time there arose no small stir about the Way”; and it was only quite natural and quite in accord with what we know of other pagan persecutions, and of human nature in general, that the precise time at which the Apostle had then arrived should have been marked by this riot. The whole city of Ephesus was then given up to the celebration of the festival held in honour of what we may call the national religion and the national deity. That festival lasted the whole month, and was accompanied, as all human festivals are apt to be accompanied, with a

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<sup>1</sup> The original of this decree will be found in Bœckh’s *Corp. Inscriptt. Græc.*, No. 2954, and the translation in Lewin’s *St. Paul*, 405.

vast deal of drunkenness and vice, as we are expressly told in an ancient Greek romance, written by a Greek of whom little is known, named Achilles Tatius.<sup>1</sup> The people of Ephesus were, in fact, mad with excitement, and it did not require any great skill to stir them up to excesses in defence of the endangered deity whose worship was the glory of their city. We know from one or two similar cases that the attack made upon St. Paul at this pagan festival had exact parallels in these early ages.

This festival in honour of Diana was generally utilised as the meeting-time of the local diet or parliament of the province of Asia, where deputies from

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<sup>1</sup> There is a long account of Achilles Tatius in the *Bibliotheca Græca* of Fabricius. He was a pagan first, and then became a Christian. His age is uncertain, but he certainly seems to have lived when pagan feasts were still observed in their ancient splendour. The book in which he describes them is called *De Amoris Clitophontis et Leucippes*, where in Book VI., ch. iii. there is an account of the drunkenness and idleness at the feast of Diana. The words of Achilles Tatius bring the scene vividly before us as St. Paul must have seen it: "It was the festival of Artemis, and every place was full of drunken men, and all the market-place was full of a multitude of men through the whole night." In Mason's *Diocletian Persecution*, p. 361, there will be found an account of a festival celebrated in honour of Artemis in the same spring season at Ancyra in Galatia. This latter account is useful as giving us an authentic account of a Celtic festival of Diana about the year 306 A.D. It would seem as if an annual public washing of the image of Diana constituted an important part of the ceremonial. Both at Ancyra as told in the Acts of St. Theodotus and at Ephesus the image of Diana was annually carried about in a waggon drawn by mules: see Guhl's *Ephesiaca*, p. 114. At Ancyra, during the Diocletian persecution, seven Christian virgins were dressed as priestesses of Diana and condemned to publicly wash the idol. Upon their refusal they were all drowned in the lake where the image was washed. The Seven Virgins of Ancyra are celebrated in the annals of Christian martyrdom for their heroic resistance on this occasion. See Mason, *l.c.*, and the *Dict. Christ. Biog.*, s.v. Seven Virgins of Ancyra and Theodotus.

all the cities of the province met together to consult on their common wants and transmit their decisions to the proconsul, a point to which we shall later on have occasion to refer. Just ninety years later one of the most celebrated of the primitive martyrs suffered upon the same occasion at Smyrna. Polycarp, the disciple of St. John, lived to a very advanced period, and helped to hand down the tradition of apostolic life and doctrine to another generation. Polycarp, is, in fact, through Irenæus, one of the chief historic links uniting the Church of later times with the apostles. Polycarp suffered martyrdom amid the excitement raised during the meeting of the same diet of Asia held, not at Ephesus, but at Smyrna, and attended by the same religious ceremonies and observances. Or let us again turn towards the West, and we shall find it the same. The martyrdoms of Vienne and Lyons described by Eusebius in the fifth book of his history are among the most celebrated in the whole history of the Church, and as such have been already referred to and used in this commentary.<sup>1</sup> These martyrdoms are an illustration of the same fact that the Christians were always exposed to peculiar danger at the annual pagan celebrations. The Gallic tribes, the seven nations of the Gauls, as they were called, were holding their annual diet or assembly, and celebrating the worship of the national deities when their zeal was excited to red-hot pitch against the Christians of Vienne and Lyons, resulting in the terrible outbreak of which Eusebius in his fifth book tells us.<sup>2</sup> As it was in Gaul about 177 A.D. and in Smyrna

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<sup>1</sup> See vol. i., pp. 8, 9.

<sup>2</sup> See the articles on Polycarp in the *Dict. Christ. Biog.*, iv. 426, and on Martyrs of Lyons, iii. 764. As regards Polycarp, see also Lightfoot's *Ignatius*, vol. i., p. 436; and as regards the Martyrs of Lyons, see

about 155 A.D., so was it in Ephesus in the year 57 ; the month's festival, celebrated in honour of Diana, accompanied with eating and drinking and idleness in abundance, told upon the populace, and made them ready for any excess, so that it is no wonder we should read, "About that time there arose no small stir about the Way." Then too there is another circumstance which may have stirred up Demetrius to special violence. His trade was probably falling off owing to St. Paul's labours, and this may have been brought home to him with special force by the results of the festival which was then in process of celebration or perhaps almost finished. All the circumstances fit this hypothesis. The shrine-makers were, we know, a very important element in the population of Ephesus, and the trade of shrine-making and the manufacture of other silver ornaments conducted in no small degree to the commercial prosperity of the city of Ephesus. This is plainly stated upon the face of our narrative : "Ye know that by this business we have our wealth, and ye see and hear that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath turned away much people," facts which could not have been more forcibly brought home to them than by the decreasing call they were experiencing for the particular articles which they produced.

Now the question may be proposed, Was this the fact? Was Ephesus celebrated for its shrine-

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Réan's *Marc-Aurèle*, pp. 329, 331. It is interesting to notice, in the writings of St. Paulinus of Nola written about the year 400 A.D., his complaints about the abuses, drunkenness and idleness, connected with the feasts and holy days observed in honour of his great patron and hero St. Felix the Martyr. A similar feeling of the moral dangers connected with religious holy days led to the abbreviation of the week's holiday following Easter and Whitsunday to Monday and Tuesday as at present.

makers, and were shrines and silver ornaments a favourite manufacture in that city? Here modern research comes in to testify to the marked truthfulness, the minute accuracy of St. Luke. We do not now need to appeal to ancient authors, as *Lives of St. Paul* like those written by Mr. Lewin or by Messrs. Conybeare and Howson do. The excavations which have taken place at Ephesus since the publication of these valuable works have amply vindicated the historic character of our narrative on this point. Mr. Wood in the course of his excavations at Ephesus discovered a vast number of inscriptions and sculptures which had once adorned the temple of Ephesus, but upon its destruction had been removed to the theatre, which continued in full operation long after the pagan temple had disappeared.<sup>1</sup> Among these inscriptions there was one enormous one brought to light. It was erected some forty years or so after St. Paul's time, but it serves in the minuteness of its details to illustrate the story of Demetrius, the speech he made, and the riot he raised. This inscription was raised in honour of a wealthy Roman named Gaius Vibius Salutaris, who had dedicated to Artemis a large number of silver images weighing from three to seven pounds each, and had even provided a competent endowment for keeping up a public festival in her honour, which was to be celebrated on the birthday of the goddess, which happened in the month of April or May. The inscription, which contains the particulars of the offering made by this Roman, would take up quite too much space if we desired to insert it. We can only now

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<sup>1</sup> The pagan temples were almost universally destroyed about the year 400. The edicts dealing with this matter and an ample commentary upon them will be found in the Theodosian Code, edited by that eminent scholar Godefroy.

refer our readers to Mr. Wood's book on Ephesus, where they will find it given at full length. A few lines may, however, be quoted to illustrate the extent to which the manufacture of silver shrines and silver ornaments in honour of Artemis must have flourished in Ephesus. This inscription enumerates the images dedicated to the goddess which Salutaris had provided by his endowments, entering into the most minute details as to their treatment and care. The following passage gives a vivid picture of Ephesian idolatry as the Apostle saw it: "Let two statues of Artemis of the weight of three pounds three ounces be religiously kept in the custody of Salutaris, who himself consecrated them, and after the death of Salutaris, let the aforesaid statues be restored to the town-clerk of the Ephesians, and let it be made a rule that they be placed at the public meetings above the seat of the council in the theatre before the golden statue of Artemis and the other statues. And a golden Artemis weighing three pounds and two silver deer attending her, and the rest of the images of the weight of two pounds ten ounces and five grammes, and a silver statue of the Sacred Senate of the weight of four pounds two ounces, and a silver statue of the council of the Ephesians. Likewise a silver Artemis bearing a torch of the weight of six pounds, and a silver statue of the Roman people." And so the inscription proceeds to name and devote silver and golden statues literally by dozens, which Salutaris intended to be borne in solemn procession on the feast-day of Diana. It is quite evident that did we possess but this inscription alone, we have here amply sufficient evidence showing us that one of the staple trades of Ephesus, one upon which the prosperity and welfare of a large section of



its inhabitants depended, was this manufacture of silver and gold ornaments directly connected with the worship of the goddess.<sup>1</sup> For it must be remembered that the guild of shrine-makers did not depend alone upon the chance liberality of a stray wealthy Roman or Greek like Salutarius, who might feel moved to create a special endowment or bestow special gifts upon the temple. The guild of shrine-makers depended upon the large and regular demand of a vast population who required a supply of cheap and handy shrines to satisfy their religious cravings. The population of the surrounding districts and towns poured into Ephesus at this annual festival of Diana and paid their devotions in her temple. But even the pagans required some kind of social and family religion. They could not live as too many nominal Christians are contented to live, without any family or personal acknowledgment of their dependence upon a higher power. There was no provision for public worship in the rural districts answering to our parochial system, and so they supplied the want by purchasing on occasions like this feast of Diana, shrines, little silver images, or likenesses of the central cell of the great temple where the sacred image rested, and which served as central points to fix their thoughts and excite the gratitude due to the goddess whom they adored. Demetrius and his fellow-craftsmen depended upon the demand created by a vast population of devout believers in Artemis, and when

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<sup>1</sup> An interesting confirmation of this fact came to light in modern times. In the year 1830 there was found in Southern France a piece of such Ephesian silver work wrought in honour of Artemis, and carried into Gaul by one of her worshippers. It is now deposited in the Bibliothèque Nationale, and has been fully described in an interesting article in the *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, vol. iii., pp. 104-106, written by that eminent antiquary C. Waldstein.



this demand began to fall off Demetrius traced the bad trade which he and his fellows were experiencing to the true source. He recognised the Christian teaching imparted by St. Paul as the deadly enemy of his unrighteous gains, and naturally directed the rage of the mob against the preacher of truth and righteousness. The actual words of Demetrius are deserving of the most careful study, for they too have been illustrated by modern discovery in the most striking manner. Having spoken of the results of St. Paul's teaching in Asia of which they all had had personal experience, he then proceeds to expatiate on its dangerous character, not only as regards their own personal interests, but as regards the goddess and her sacred dignity as well: "And not only is there danger that this our trade come into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana be made of no account, and that she should be deposed from her magnificence whom all Asia and the world worshippeth." Demetrius cleverly but lightly touches upon the self-interest of the workmen. He does not dwell on that topic too long, because it is never well for an orator who wishes to rouse his hearers to enthusiasm to dwell too long or too openly upon merely selfish consideration. Man is indeed intensely selfish by nature, but then he does not like to be told so too openly, or to have his own selfishness paraded too frequently before his face. He likes to be flattered as if he cherished a belief in higher things, and to have his low ends and baser motives clothed in a similitude of noble enthusiasm. Demetrius hints therefore at their own impoverishment as the results of Paul's teaching, but expatiates on the certain destruction which awaits the glory of their time-honoured and world-renowned deity if free course be any longer

permitted to such doctrine. This speech is a skilful composition all through. It shows that the ancient rhetorical skill of the Greeks still flourished in Ephesus, and not the least skilful, and at the same time not the least true touch in the speech was that wherein Demetrius reminded his hearers that the world were onlookers and watchers of their conduct, noting whether or not they would vindicate Diana's assailed dignity. It was a true touch, I say, for modern research has shown that the worship of the Ephesian Artemis was world-wide in its extent; it had come from the distant east, and had travelled to the farthest west. We have already noted the testimony of modern travellers showing that her worship extended over Asia Minor in every direction. This fact Demetrius long ago told the Ephesians, and ancient authors have repeated his testimony, and modern travellers have merely corroborated them. But we were not aware how accurate was Demetrius about the whole world worshipping Artemis, till in our own time the statues and temples of the Ephesian goddess were found existing so far west as Southern Gaul, Marseilles, and the coast of Spain, proving that wherever Asiatic sailors and Asiatic merchants came thither they brought with them the worship of their favourite deity.<sup>1</sup>

Let us pass on, however, and see whether the

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<sup>1</sup> See the *Revue Archéologique* for 1886, vol. ii., p. 257, about the worship of the Ephesian Artemis in Marseilles and Southern Gaul, and an article in the *Journal of Hellenic Studies* for 1889, vol. x., p. 216, by Professor Ramsay, on the vast extent of Artemis worship in Asia. In the same journal, for 1890, vol. xi., p. 235, we have an account of the discovery of one of the original seats of Artemis worship in Eastern Cilicia by Mr. J. T. Bent; while again, in vol. iv., p. 40-43, Ramsay gives us a subscription list raised in Pisidia for the purpose of building a temple of Artemis in a country district.

remainder of this narrative will not afford us subject-matter for abundant illustrations. The mob drank in the speech of Demetrius, and responded with the national shout, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians," a cry which has been found inscribed on altars and tablets all over the province of Asia, showing that it was a kind of watchword among the inhabitants of that district. The crowd of workmen whom Demetrius had been addressing then rushed into the theatre, the usual place of assembly for the people of Ephesus, dragging with them "Gaius and Aristarchus,<sup>1</sup> men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel." The Jews too followed the mob, eager to make the unexpected tumult serve their own hostile purposes against St. Paul. News of the riot was soon carried to the Apostle, who learning of the danger to which his friends were exposed desired to enter that theatre the magnificent proportions and ornamentation of which have been for the first time displayed to modern eyes by the labours of Mr. Wood. But the local Christians knew the Ephesian mob and their state of excitement better than St. Paul did, and so they would not allow him to risk his life amid the infuriated crowd. The Apostle's teaching too had reached the very highest ranks of Ephesian and Asiatic society. The very Asiarchs, being his friends, sent unto him and requested him not to enter the theatre. Here again we come across one of those incidental references which display St. Luke's acquaintance with the local peculiarities of the Ephesian constitution, and which have been only really appreciated in the light of modern discoveries. In the time of

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<sup>1</sup> Aristarchus is described in the Martyrologies as the first bishop of Thessalonica, and is said to have suffered martyrdom under Nero. He is commemorated on August 4th.

King James I., when the Authorised Version was made, the translators knew nothing of the proof of the sacred writer's accuracy which lay under their hands in the words, "Certain of the Asiarchs or chief officers of Asia," and so they translated them very literally but very incorrectly, "Certain of the chief of Asia," ignoring completely the official rank and title which these men possessed. A few words must suffice to give a brief explanation of the office these men held. The province of Asia from ancient times had celebrated this feast of Artemis at an assembly of all the cities of Asia. This we have already explained. The Romans united with the worship of Artemis the worship of the Emperor and of the City of Rome; so that loyalty to the Emperor and loyalty to the national religion went hand in hand. They appointed certain officials to preside at these games, they made them presidents of the local diets or parliaments which assembled to discuss local matters at these national assemblies, they gave them the highest positions in the province next to the proconsul, they surrounded them with great pomp, and endued them with considerable power so long as the festival lasted, and then, being intent on uniting economy with their generosity, they made these Asiarchs, as they were called, responsible for all the expenses incurred in the celebration of the games and diets. It was a clever policy, as it secured the maximum of contentment on the people's part with the minimum of expense to the imperial government. This arrangement clearly limited the position of the Asiarchate to rich men, as they alone could afford the enormous expenses involved. The Greeks, specially those of Asia, as we have already pointed out, were very flashy in their disposition. They loved titles and decorations;

so much so that one of their own orators of St. Paul's day, Dion Chrysostom, tells us that, provided they got a title, they would suffer any indignity. There were therefore crowds of rich men always ready to take the office of Asiarch, which by degrees was turned into a kind of life peerage, a man once an Asiarch always retaining the title, while his wife was called the Asiarchess, as we find from the inscriptions. The Asiarchs were, in fact, the official aristocracy of the province of Asia. They had assembled on this occasion for the purpose of sitting in the local parliament and presiding over the annual games in honour of Diana.<sup>1</sup> Their interests and their honour were all bound up with the worship of the goddess, and yet the preaching of St. Paul had told so powerfully upon the whole province, that even among the very officials of the State religion St. Paul had friends and supporters anxious to preserve his life, and therefore sent him a message not to adventure himself into the theatre. It is no wonder that Demetrius the silversmith roused his fellow-craftsmen into activity and fanned the flame of their wrath, for the worship of Diana of the Ephesians was indeed in danger when the very men whose office bound them to its support were in league with such an uncompromising opponent as this Paul of Tarsus. St. Luke thus gives a glimpse of the constitution of Ephesus and of the province of Asia in his time. He shows us the peculiar institution of the Asiarchate, and then when we turn to the inscriptions which Mr. Wood and other modern discoverers have

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<sup>1</sup> These local parliaments under the Roman Empire have been the subject of much modern investigation at the hands of French and German scholars. See for references to the authorities on the point an article which I wrote in *Macmillan's Magazine* for 1882.

unearthed, we find that the Asiarchs occupy a most prominent position in them, vindicating in the amplest manner the introduction of them by St. Luke as assembled at Ephesus at this special season, and there interesting themselves in the welfare of the great Apostle.<sup>1</sup>

But now there comes on the scene another official, whose title and office have been the subject of many an illustration furnished by modern research. The Jews who followed the mob into the theatre, when they did not see St. Paul there, put forward one Alexander as their spokesman. This man has been by some identified with Alexander the coppersmith, to whom St. Paul refers (2 Tim. iv. 14) when writing to Timothy, then resident at Ephesus, as a man who had done much injury to the Christian cause. He may have been well known as a brother-tradesman by the Ephesian silversmiths, and he seems to have been regarded by the Jews as a kind of leader who might be useful in directing the rage of the mob against the Christians whom they hated. The rioters, however, did not distinguish as clearly as the Jews would have wished between the Christians and the Jews. They made the same mistake as the Romans did for more than a century later, and confounded Jews and Christians together. They were all, in any case, opponents of idol worship and chiefly of their favourite goddess, and therefore the sight of Alexander merely intensified their rage, so much that for the space of two hours they continued to vociferate their favourite cry, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians."

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<sup>1</sup> See the index to Lightfoot's *Ignatius and Polycarp* for extended references to the Asiarchate, and also Mommsen's *Roman Provinces* (Dickson's translation), vol. i., pp. 345-7.

<sup>2</sup> The Ephesian mob four hundred years later displayed at the third General Council held at Ephesus in 431 an extraordinary power of



Now, however, there appeared another official, whose title and character have become famous through his action on this occasion: "When the town-clerk had quieted the multitude, he saith, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there who knoweth not that the city of the Ephesians is temple-keeper (or Neocoros) of the great Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter?" Here we have several terms which have been illustrated and confirmed by the excavations of Mr. Wood. The town-clerk or recorder is introduced, because he was the chief executive officer of the city of Ephesus, and, as such, responsible to the Roman authorities for the peace and order of the city. The city of Ephesus was a free city, retaining its ancient laws and customs like Athens and Thessalonica, but only on the condition that these laws were effective and peace duly kept. Otherwise the Roman authorities and their police would step in. These town-clerks or recorders of Ephesus are known from this one passage in the Acts of the Apostles, but they are still better known from the inscriptions which have been brought to light at Ephesus. I have mentioned, for instance, the immense inscription which Mr. Wood discovered in the theatre commemorating the gift to the temple of Diana of a vast number of gold and silver images made by one Vibius Salutarius. This inscription lays down that the images should be kept in the custody of the town-clerk or recorder when not required for use in the

keeping up the same cry for hours. See the story of the Council as told by Hefele in the third volume of his *General Councils* (Clark's translation). Nothing will give such a vigorous idea of the confusion which then prevailed at Ephesus as a glance at Mansi's Acts of that Council. The cry "Anathema to Nestorius," the heretic against whom the Council declared, was maintained so long and so continuously that one would imagine that orthodoxy depended on strength of lungs.



solemn religious processions made through the city. The names of a great many town-clerks have been recovered from the ruins of Ephesus, some of them coming from the reign of Nero, the very period when this riot took place. It is not impossible that we may yet recover the very name of the town-clerk who gave the riotous mob this very prudent advice, "Ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rash," which has made him immortal. Then, again, a title for the city of Ephesus is used in this pacific oration which is strictly historical, and such as would naturally have been used by a man in the town-clerk's position. He calls Ephesus the "temple-keeper," or "Neocoros," as the word literally is, of the goddess Diana, and this is one of the most usual and common titles in the lately discovered inscriptions. Ephesus and the Ephesians were indeed so devoted to the worship of that deity and so affected by the honour she conferred upon them that they delighted to call themselves the temple-sweepers, or sextons, of the great Diana's temple. In fact, their devotion to the worship of the goddess so far surpassed that of ordinary cities that the Ephesians were accustomed to subordinate their reverence for the Emperors to their reverence for their religion, and thus in the decree passed by them honouring Vibius Salutaris who endowed their temple with many splendid gifts, to which we have already referred, they begin by describing themselves thus: "In the presidency of Tiberius Claudius Antipater Julianus, on the sixth day of the first decade of the month Poseideon, it was resolved by the Council and the Public Assembly of the Necori (of Artemis) and Lovers of Augustus." The Ephesians must have been profoundly devoted to Diana's worship when in that age of gross materialism

they would dare to place any deity higher than that of the reigning emperor, the only god in whom a true Roman really believed ; for unregenerate human nature at that time looked at the things alone which are seen and believed in nothing else.

The rest of the town-clerk's speech is equally deserving of study from every point of view. He gives us a glimpse of the Apostle's method of controversy: it was wise, courteous, conciliatory. It did not hurt the feelings or outrage the sentiments of natural reverence, which ought ever to be treated with the greatest respect, for natural reverence is a delicate plant, and even when directed towards a wrong object ought to be most gently handled. "Ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of our goddess.<sup>1</sup> If therefore Demetrius, and the craftsmen that are with him, have a matter against any man, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls: let them accuse one another." Modern

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<sup>1</sup> St. Paul's zeal never outran his discretion. He never blasphemed or spoke lightly of ideas and names held sacred by his hearers. I remember in our local ecclesiastical history an example of the opposite course which has often found imitators. When Charles Wesley first visited Dublin about the year 1747, he left behind a zealous but very unwise preacher to continue his work. His language was so violent that the mob were roused to burn his meeting-house, which stood in Marlborough Street near the spot where the Roman Catholic Cathedral now stands. He then took his stand on Oxmantown Green in the northern suburbs, where he preached in the open air. On Christmas Day he took the Incarnation as his subject, and began, as St. Paul never would have done, by crying aloud, "I curse and blaspheme all gods and goddesses in heaven and earth, save the Babe that was born in Bethlehem and was wrapped in swaddling clothes," whereupon the Dublin mob with their ready wit in the matter of nick-names called the Methodists swaddlers, a title which has ever since stuck to them in Ireland, and is to this day commonly used by the Roman Catholics. This seems an interesting illustration of the typical character of the Acts,

research has thrown additional light upon these words. The Roman system of provincial government anticipated the English system of assize courts, moving from place to place, introduced by Henry II. for the purpose of bringing justice home to every man's door.<sup>1</sup> It was quite natural for the proconsul of Asia to hold his court at the same time as the annual assembly of the province of Asia and the great festival of Diana. The great concourse of people rendered such a course specially convenient, while the presence of the proconsul helped to keep the peace, as, to take a well-known instance, the presence of Pontius Pilate at the great annual Paschal feast at Jerusalem secured the Romans against any sudden rebellion, and also enabled him to dispense justice after the manner of an assize judge, to which fact we would find an allusion in the words of St. Mark (xv. 6), "Now at the feast he used to release unto them one prisoner, whom they asked of him."

It has been said, indeed, that St. Luke here puts into the town-clerk's mouth words he could never have used, representing him as saying "there are pro-consuls" when, in fact, there was never more than one proconsul in the province of Asia. Such criticism is of the weakest character. Surely every man that ever speaks in public knows that one of the commonest usages is to say there are judges or magistrates, using the plural when one judge or magistrate may alone be exercising jurisdiction! But there is another explanation, which completely solves the difficulty

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<sup>1</sup> See Preface by Bishop Stubbs to Benedict of Peterborough, *Gesta Regis Hen. II.*, t. ii., pp. lxx.-lxxi. (Rolls Series); Madox, *Hist. of Exchequer*, pp. 84-96, for an account of the rise of the English Assize System; see Le Blant, *Les Actes des Martyrs*, pp. 50-121, and Marquardt's *Röm. Staatsverwalt.*, p. 365 about Roman assizes. There were eleven circuits in Asia.

and vindicates St. Luke's minute accuracy. Three hundred years ago John Calvin, in his commentary, noted the difficulty, and explained it by the supposition that the proconsul had appointed deputies or assessors who held the courts in his name. There is, however, a more satisfactory explanation. It was the reign of Nero, and his brutal example had begun to debauch the officials through the provinces. Silanus, the proconsul of Asia, was disliked by Nero and by his mother as a possible candidate for the imperial crown, being of the family of Augustus. Two of his subordinates, Celer and Ælius, the collectors of the imperial revenue in Asia, poisoned him, and as a reward were permitted to govern the province, enjoying perhaps in common the title of proconsul and exercising the jurisdiction of the office.<sup>1</sup> Finally, the tone of the town-clerk's words as he ends his address is thoroughly that of a Roman official. He feels himself responsible for the riot, and knows that he may be called upon to account for it. Peace was what the Roman authorities sought and desired at all hazards, and every measure which threatened the peace, or every organisation, no matter how desirable, a fire brigade even, which might conceivably be turned to purposes of political agitation, was strictly discouraged.

The correspondence of Pliny with the Emperor Trajan some fifty years or so later than this riot is the best commentary upon the town-clerk's speech. We find, for instance, in Pliny's *Letters*, Book X., No. 42, a letter telling about a fire which broke out in Nicomedia, the capital of Bithynia, of which province Pliny was proconsul. He wrote to the Emperor

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<sup>1</sup> See Lewin's *St. Paul*, i. 337, 338.

describing the damage done, and suggesting that a fire brigade numbering one hundred and fifty men might be instituted. The Emperor would not hear of it, however. Such clubs or societies he considered dangerous, and so he wrote back a letter which proves how continuous was Roman policy, how abhorrent to the imperial authorities were all voluntary organisations which might be used for the purposes of public agitation: "You are of opinion that it would be proper to establish a company of fire-men in Nicomedia, agreeably to what has been practised in several other cities. But it is to be remembered that societies of this sort have greatly disturbed the peace of the province in general and of those cities in particular. Whatever name we give them, and for whatever purposes they may be founded, they will not fail to form themselves into factious assemblies, however short their meetings will be"; and so Pliny was obliged to devise other measures for the security and welfare of the cities committed to his charge.<sup>1</sup> The accidental burning of a city would not be attributed to him as a fault, while the occurrence of a street riot might be the beginning of a social war which would bring down ruin upon the Empire at large.

When the recorder of Ephesus had ended his speech he dismissed the assembly, leaving to us a precious record illustrative of the methods of Roman government, of the interior life of Ephesus in days long gone by, and, above all else, of the thorough honesty of the writer whom the Holy Spirit impelled to trace the earliest triumphs of the Cross amid the teeming fields of Gentile paganism.

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<sup>1</sup> A similar jealousy of voluntary organisations is still perpetuated in France under the code Napoleon, which largely embodies Roman methods and ideas.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### *ST. PAUL AND THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.*

“ And after the uproar was ceased, Paul having sent for the disciples and exhorted them, took leave of them, and departed for to go into Macedonia. . . . And upon the first day of the week, when we were gathered together (at Troas) to break bread, Paul discoursed with them, intending to depart on the morrow; and prolonged his speech until midnight. . . . And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called to him the elders of the church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye yourselves know, from the first day I set foot in Asia, after what manner I was with you all the time, serving the Lord with all lowliness of mind, and with tears. . . . Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in the which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops, to feed the Church of God, which He purchased with His own blood.”—ACTS xx. 1, 7, 17-19, 28.

THE period of St. Paul's career at which we have now arrived was full of life, vigour, activity. He was in the very height of his powers, was surrounded with responsibilities, was pressed with cares and anxieties; and yet the character of the sacred narrative is very peculiar. From the passover of the year 57, soon after which the Apostle had to leave Ephesus, till the passover of the next year, we learn but very little of St. Paul's work from the narrative of St. Luke. The five verses with which the twentieth chapter begins tell us all that St. Luke apparently knew about the Apostle's actions during that time. He gives us the story of a mere outsider, who knew next to nothing of the work St. Paul was doing. The Apostle left Ephesus and

went into Macedonia, whence he departed into Greece. Three months were occupied in teaching at Corinth, and then, intending to sail from Cenchreæ to Ephesus, he suddenly changed his mind upon the discovery of a Jewish plot, altered his route, disappointed his foes, and paid a second visit to Macedonia. In this narrative, which is all St. Luke gives, we have the account, brief and concise, of one who was acquainted merely with the bare outlines of the Apostle's work, and knew nothing of his inner life and trials. St. Luke, in fact, was so much taken up with his own duties at Philippi, where he had been labouring for the previous five years, that he had no time to think of what was going on elsewhere. At any rate his friend and pupil Theophilus had simply asked him for a narrative so far as he knew it of the progress of the gospel. He had no idea that he was writing anything more than a story for the private use of Theophilus, and he therefore put down what he knew and had experienced, without troubling himself concerning other matters. I have read criticisms of the Acts—proceeding principally, I must confess, from German sources—which seem to proceed on the supposition that St. Luke was consciously writing an ecclesiastical history of the whole early Church which he knew and felt was destined to serve for ages.<sup>1</sup> But this was evidently not the case.

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<sup>1</sup> I do not wish to decry the industry and learning of German critics, to whom I owe much, as my various references show ; but I am always suspicious of their historical conclusions, simply because they are pure students, and are therefore ignorant of life and men. The more industrious and secluded a life a man may lead, so much the more ignorant of the practical world a man becomes, and so much the more unfitted to be a real historian, who must know men as well as books. History is a picture of real life in the past, and to paint it a man must know real life in the present. As well might we set an academic scientist who



St. Luke was consciously writing a story merely for a friend's study, and dreamt not of the wider fame and use destined for his book. This accounts in a simple and natural way, not only for what St. Luke inserts, but also for what he leaves out, and he manifestly left out a great deal. We may take this passage at which we have now arrived as an illustration of his methods of writing sacred history. This period of ten months, from the time St. Paul left Ephesus till he returned to Philippi at the following Easter season, was filled with most important labours which have borne fruit unto all ages of the Church, yet St. Luke dismisses them in a few words. Just let us realise what happened in these eventful months. St. Paul wrote First Corinthians in April A.D. 57. In May he passed to Troas, where, as we learn from Second Corinthians, he laboured for a short time with much success. He then passed into Macedonia, urged on by his restless anxiety concerning the Corinthian Church. In Macedonia he laboured during the following five or six months. How intense and absorbing must have been his work during that time! It was then that he preached the gospel with signs and wonders

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regarded all lines as straight and all bars as rigid to build the Forth Bridge, as set a man who knows nothing of human nature and how it acts under the stress of practical affairs to write the story of human life two thousand years ago. We may take and use German investigations, but we should apply English common sense and experience to test German conclusions. This rule is, I fear, too much forgotten in a great deal of the literature that is now being pawned off upon the English world in the name of criticism. Surely the fate of Baur's theories ought to be a warning to all young men against swallowing as the latest results of scholarship everything that comes clothed in the German language! The English nation has a reputation for solid common sense. What fools the Germans would be did they take everything English as full of common sense because printed in our language!

round about even unto Illyricum, as he notes in Romans xvi. 19, an epistle written this very year from Corinth. The last time that he had been in Macedonia he was a hunted fugitive fleeing from place to place. Now he seems to have lived in comparative peace, so far at least as the Jewish synagogues were concerned. He penetrated, therefore, into the mountainous districts west of Berœa, bearing the gospel tidings into cities and villages which had as yet heard nothing of them. But preaching was not his only work in Macedonia. He had written his first Epistle to Corinth from Ephesus a few months before. In Macedonia he received from Titus, his messenger, an account of the manner in which that epistle had been received, and so from Macedonia he despatched his second Corinthian Epistle, which must be carefully studied if we desire to get an adequate idea of the labours and anxieties amid which the Apostle was then immersed (see 2 Cor. ii. 13, and vii. 5 and 6). And then he passed into Greece, where he spent three months at Corinth, settling the affairs of that very celebrated but very disorderly Christian community. The three months spent there must have been a period of overwhelming business. Let us recount the subjects which must have taken up every moment of St. Paul's time. First there were the affairs of the Corinthian Church itself. He had to reprove, comfort, direct, set in order. The whole moral, spiritual, social, intellectual conceptions of Corinth had gone wrong. There was not a question, from the most elementary topic of morals and the social considerations connected with female dress and activities, to the most solemn points of doctrine and worship, the Resurrection and the Holy Communion, concerning which difficulties, disorders, and dissensions had not been raised. All these had

to be investigated and decided by the Apostle. Then, again, the Jewish controversy, and the oppositions to himself personally which the Judaising party had excited, demanded his careful attention. This controversy was a troublesome one in Corinth just then, but it was a still more troublesome one in Galatia, and was fast raising its head in Rome. The affairs of both these great and important churches, the one in the East, the other in the West, were pressing upon St. Paul at this very time. While he was immersed in all the local troubles of Corinth, he had to find time at Corinth to write the Epistle to the Galatians and the Epistle to the Romans. How hard it must have been for the Apostle to concentrate his attention on the affairs of Corinth when his heart and brain were torn with anxieties about the schisms, divisions, and false doctrines which were flourishing among his Galatian converts, or threatening to invade the Church at Rome, where as yet he had not been able to set forth his own conception of gospel truth, and thus fortify the disciples against the attacks of those subtle foes of Christ who were doing their best to turn the Catholic Church into a mere narrow Jewish sect, devoid of all spiritual power and life.

But this was not all, or nearly all. St. Paul was at the same time engaged in organising a great collection throughout all the churches where he had ministered on behalf of the poor Christians at Jerusalem, and he was compelled to walk most warily and carefully in this matter. Every step he took was watched by foes ready to interpret it unfavourably; every appointment he made, every arrangement, no matter how wise or prudent, was the subject of keenest scrutiny and criticism. With all these various matters

accumulating upon him it is no wonder that St. Paul should have written of himself at this very period in words which vividly describe his distractions: "Beside those things that are without, there is that which presseth upon me daily, the care of all the churches." And yet St. Paul gives us a glimpse of the greatness of his soul as we read the epistles which were the outcome of this period of intense but fruitful labour. He carried a mighty load, but yet he carried it lightly. His present anxieties were numerous, but they did not shut out all thoughts upon other topics. The busiest man then was just the same as the busiest man still. He was the man who had the most time and leisure to bestow thought upon the future. The anxieties and worries of the present were numerous and exacting, but St. Paul did not allow his mind to be so swallowed up in them as to shut out all care about other questions equally important. While he was engaged in the manifold cares which present controversies brought, he was all the while meditating a mission to Rome, and contemplating a journey still farther to Spain and Gaul,<sup>1</sup> and the bounds of the Western ocean. And then, finally, there was the care of St. Paul's own soul, the sustenance and development of his spirit by prayer and meditation and worship and reading, which he never neglected under any circumstances. All these things combined must have rendered this period of close upon twelve months one of the Apostle's busiest and intensest times, and yet St. Luke disposes of it in a few brief verses of this twentieth chapter.

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<sup>1</sup> I say to Gaul, because I take it that he would have sailed to Marseilles, which was then the great port of communication with Asia Minor, as we have noted above, pp. 372-74, when treating of the worship of Diana and its extension from the East to Marseilles.

After St. Paul's stay at Corinth, he determined to proceed to Jerusalem according to his predetermined plan, bringing with him the proceeds of the collection which he had made. He wished to go by sea, as he had done some three years before, sailing from Cenchreæ direct to Syria. The Jews of Corinth, however, were as hostile as ever, and so they hatched a plot to murder him before his embarkation. St. Paul, however, having learned their designs, suddenly changed his route, and took his journey by land through Macedonia, visiting once more his former converts, and tarrying to keep the passover at Philippi with the little company of Christian Jews who there resided. This circumstance throws light upon verses 4 and 5 of this twentieth chapter, which run thus: "There accompanied him as far as Asia Sopater of Berea, the son of Pyrrhus; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus. But these had gone before, and were waiting for us at Troas." St. Paul came to Philippi, found St. Luke there, celebrated the passover, and then sailed away with St. Luke to join the company who had gone before. And they had gone before for a very good reason. They were all, except Timothy, Gentile Christians, persons therefore who, unlike St. Paul, had nothing to do with the national rites and customs of born Jews, and who might be much more profitably exercised in working among the Gentile converts at Troas, free from any danger of either giving or taking offence in connexion with the passover, a lively instance of which danger Trophimus, one of their number, subsequently afforded in Jerusalem, when his presence alone in St. Paul's company caused the spread of a rumour which raised the riot so fatal to St. Paul's liberty:

“For they had seen with him in the city Trophimus the Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple” (xxi. 29). This incident, together with St. Paul’s conduct at Jerusalem as told in the twenty-sixth verse of the twenty-first chapter illustrates vividly St. Paul’s view of the Jewish law and Jewish rites and ceremonies. They were for Jews national ceremonies. They had a meaning for them. They commemorated certain national deliverances, and as such might be lawfully used. St. Paul himself could eat the passover and cherish the feelings of a Jew, heartily thankful to God for the deliverance from Egypt wrought out through Moses centuries ago for his ancestors, and his mind could then go on and rejoice over a greater deliverance still wrought out at this same paschal season by a greater than Moses. St. Paul openly proclaimed the lawfulness of the Jewish rites for Jews, but opposed their imposition upon the Gentiles. He regarded them as *tolerabiles ineptiæ*, and therefore observed them to please his weaker brethren; but sent his Gentile converts on before, lest perhaps the sight of his own example might weaken their faith and lead them to a compliance with that Judaising party who were ever ready to avail themselves of any opportunity to weaken St. Paul’s teaching and authority. St. Paul always strove to unite wisdom and prudence with faithfulness to principle lest by any means his labour should be in vain.

St. Luke now joined St. Paul at Philippi, and henceforth gives his own account of what happened on this eventful journey. From Philippi they crossed to Troas. It was the spring-time, and the weather was more boisterous than later in the year, and so the voyage took five days to accomplish, while two days had



sufficed on a previous occasion. They came to Troas, and there remained for a week, owing doubtless to the exigencies of the ship and its cargo. On the first day of the week St. Paul assembled the Church for worship. The meeting was held on what we should call Saturday evening; but we must remember that the Jewish first day began from sundown on Saturday or the Sabbath.<sup>1</sup> This is the first notice in the Acts of the observance of the Lord's day as the time of special Christian worship. We have, however, earlier notices of the first day in connexion with Christian observances. The apostles, for instance, met together on the first day, as we are told in John xx. 19, and again eight days after, as the twenty-sixth verse of the same chapter tells. St. Paul's first Epistle to Corinth was written twelve months earlier than this visit to Troas, and it expressly mentions (ch. xvi. 2) the first day of the week as the time ordered by St. Paul for the setting apart of the Galatian contribution to the collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem; and so here again at Troas we see that the Asiatic Christians observed the same solemn time for worship and the celebration of the Eucharist. Such glimpses—chance notices, we might call them, were there not a higher Providence watching over the unconscious writer—show us how little we can conclude from mere silence about the ritual, worship, and government of the Apostolic Church,<sup>2</sup> and illustrate the vast importance of

<sup>1</sup> There is to this day a trace of this custom in the Book of Common Prayer in the rubric which prescribes that the collect for Sunday shall be said on Saturday evening. In colleges, too, according to Archbishop Laud's rules, surplices are worn on Saturday evenings as well as on Sundays.

<sup>2</sup> See above, pp. 342 and 361, where I have pointed out the dangerous character of the argument from mere silence. I may perhaps recur to the example of Meyer, the eminent textual critic, to illustrate my



studying carefully the extant records of the Christian Church in the second century if we wish to gain fresh light upon the history and customs of the apostolic age. If three or four brief texts were blotted out of the New Testament, it would be quite possible to argue from silence merely that the apostles and their immediate followers did not observe the Lord's Day in any way whatsoever, and that the custom of stated worship and solemn eucharistic celebrations on that day were a corruption introduced in post-apostolic times. The best interpreters of the New Testament are, as John Wesley long ago well pointed out in his preface to his celebrated but now almost unknown Christian Library, the apostolic fathers and the writers of the age next following the apostles.<sup>1</sup>

view of German critics stated in my first note to this chapter, p. 386 above. Meyer is an exhaustive textual critic, but as soon as he ventures on the region of history he falls into this trap, and concludes from the argument of silence that Apollos was never baptized with Christian baptism because he was so clever and spiritually enlightened that he did not need it. But, then, how does he account for the case of St. Paul? Was Apollos superior to St. Paul? And yet he was baptized. But the illustrations of the fallacies of this method of argumentation would be endless. If the argument of silence is sufficient to prove a negative, what are we to do with female communicants? There is not a single instance of them in the New Testament. It is here, however, that the study of the second-century writers is so valuable as illustrating the silence of the first. See my note on p. 342 above.

<sup>1</sup> The Christian library was a series of fifty volumes which Wesley published for the use of his followers. They were begun in 1749 and completed in 1755. "The opening volume contains, 1. The Epistles of the apostolical fathers Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp, whom he believed to be endued with the extraordinary assistance of the Holy Spirit, and whose writings, though not of equal authority with the Holy Scriptures, are worthy of a much greater respect than any composures that have been made since. 2. The martyrdoms of Ignatius and Polycarp. 3. An extract from the Homilies of Macarius, born about the year 301." See Tyerman's *Life of Wesley*, ii. 25, 65-67.

We may take it for a certain rule of interpretation that, whenever we find a widely established practice or custom mentioned in the writings of a Christian author of the second century, it originated in apostolic times. It was only natural that this should have been the case. We are all inclined to venerate the past, and to cry it up as the golden age. Now this tendency must have been intensified tenfold in the case of the Christians of the second century. The first century was the time of our Lord and the age of the apostles. Sacred memories clustered thick round it, and every ceremony and rite which came from that time must have been profoundly revered, while every new ceremony or custom must have been rudely challenged, and its author keenly scrutinised as one who presumptuously thought he could improve upon the wisdom of men inspired by the Holy Ghost and miraculously gifted by God. It is for this reason we regard the second-century doctors and apologists as the best commentary upon the sacred writers, because in them we see the Church of the apostolic age living, acting, displaying itself amid the circumstances and scenes of actual life.

Just let us take as an illustration the case of this observance of the first day of the week. The Acts of the Apostles tells us but very little about it, simply because there is but little occasion to mention what must have seemed to St. Luke one of the commonest and best-known facts. But Justin Martyr some eighty years later was describing Christianity for the Roman Emperor. He was defending it against the outrageous and immoral charges brought against it, and depicting the purity, the innocency, and simplicity of its sacred rites. Among other subjects dealt with, he touches

upon the time when Christians offered up formal and stated worship. It was absolutely necessary therefore for him to treat of the subject of the Lord's Day. In the sixty-seventh chapter of Justin's First *Apology*, we find him describing the Christian weekly festival in words which throw back an interesting light upon the language of St. Luke touching the Lord's Day which St. Paul passed at Troas. Justin writes thus on this topic: "Upon the day called Sunday all who live in cities or in the country gather together unto one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen;<sup>1</sup> and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are

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<sup>1</sup> Here we have an illustration of 1 Cor. xiv. 16: "Else if thou bless with the Spirit, how shall he that filleth the place of the unlearned say the Amen at the giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?" See also ch. lxv. of Justin's same *Apology* for another reference to the Amen, and cf. *Apost. Constitutions*, viii. 10; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat.*, ch. v.; Euseb., *H. E.*, vi. 43 and vii. 9; Ambros. *De Sacrament.*, iv. 4; Jerom., *Epist.*, 62; Chrysost., *Hom.*, xxxv. on 1st Cor.; Bingham's *Antiqq.*, XV. iii. 26; and the article on Amen in the first volume of Smith's *Dict. Christ. Antiqq.* The preceding chapters of Justin's *Apology*, lxv. and lxvi., are full of information. They expressly state that in the Primitive Church no unbaptized person was allowed to communicate, an elementary point of Christian practice about which some persons and some Christian societies seem at present very uncertain. Hooker's words, *Eccles. Pol.*, Book V. ch. lxvii., are very clear on this topic.

absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And those who are well to do and willing, give what each thinks fit ; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succours the orphans and widows, and those who through sickness or any other cause are in want, and those who are in bonds, and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need. But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world ; and Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead." This passage gives us a full account of Christian customs in the first half of the second century, when thousands must have been still alive who remembered the times of the apostles, enabling us to realise what must have been the character of the assembly and of the worship in which St. Paul played a leading part at Troas.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The continuous character, the strong conservatism of the early Christian Church receives an interesting illustration from the history of the Sabbath as distinguished from the Lord's Day. The Jewish Church gave the outward form to Christianity ; and though Christianity parted company with Judaism by the end of the first century, yet the sacred character of the Sabbath was still perpetuated among the Gentiles notwithstanding St. Paul's strong language in Galatians and Colossians. In the fourth century the Sabbath was observed in many places in the same manner as the Lord's Day. St. Athanasius says : " We meet on the Sabbath, not indeed being infected with Judaism, but to worship Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath." Timothy, one of his successors at Alexandria, says that the Holy Communion was administered on the Sabbath as on the Lord's Day, and that these two were the only days on which it was celebrated in that city. In the time of St. Chrysostom the two great weekly festivals were the Sabbath and the Lord's Day. It was the same in the fifth century in the Egyptian monasteries, where the services for Saturday and Sunday were exactly the same. See a full account of this matter in Bingham's *Antiquities*, Book XIII. ch. ix. sec. iii.

There was, however, a difference between the celebration at Troas and the celebrations of which Justin Martyr speaks, though we learn not of this difference from Justin himself, but from Pliny's letter to Trajan, concerning which we have often spoken. St. Paul met the Christians of Troas in the evening, and celebrated the Holy Communion with them about midnight. It was the first day of the week according to Jewish computation, though it was what we should call Saturday evening. The ship in which the apostolic company was travelling was about to sail on the morrow, and so St. Paul gladly joined the local church in its weekly breaking of bread. It was exactly the same here at Troas as reported by St. Luke, as it was at Corinth where the evening celebrations were turned into occasions of gluttony and ostentation, as St. Paul tells us in the eleventh of First Corinthians. The Christians evidently met at this time in the evening to celebrate the Lord's Supper. It has been often thought that St. Paul, having referred just twelve months before in the First Corinthian Epistle to the gross abuses connected with the evening celebrations at Corinth, and having promised to set the abuses of Corinth in order when he visited that church, did actually change the time of the celebration of Holy Communion from the evening to the morning, when he spent the three months there of which this chapter speaks.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps he did make the change, but we have no information on the point; and if he did make the change for Corinth, it is evident that he did not intend to impose it as a rule upon the whole Christian Church

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<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine, in *Epist.*, cxviii., *Ad Januar.*, cc. vi. vii., was one of the first to suggest this idea. The passage is quoted by Bingham, *Antiqq.*, XV. vii. 8.

when a few weeks after leaving Corinth he celebrated the Lord's Supper at Troas in the evening. By the second century, however, the change had been made. Justin Martyr indeed does not give a hint as to the time when Holy Communion was administered in the passages to which we have referred. He tells us that none but baptized persons were admitted to partake of it, but gives us no minor details. Pliny, however, writing of the state of affairs in Bithynia,—and it bordered upon the province where Troas was situated,—tells us from the confession extracted out of apostate Christians that “the whole of their fault lay in this, that they were wont to meet together on a stated day, *before it was light*, and sing among themselves alternately a hymn to Christ as God, and to bind themselves by a sacrament (or oath) not to the commission of any wickedness, but not to be guilty of theft or robbery or adultery.” After this early service they then separated, and assembled again in the evening to partake of a common meal. The Agape or Love-Feast was united with the Holy Communion in St. Paul's day. Experience, however, showed that such a union must lead to grave abuses, and so in that final consolidation which the Church received during the last quarter of the first century, when the Lord's Second Coming was seen to be not so immediate as some at first expected, the two institutions were divided ; the Holy Communion being appointed as the early morning service of the Lord's Day, while the Agape was left in its original position as an evening meal. And so have matters continued ever since. The Agape indeed has almost died out. A trace of it perhaps remains in the blessed bread distributed in Roman Catholic churches on the Continent ; while again the love-feasts instituted by



John Wesley and continued among his followers were an avowed imitation of this primitive institution. The Agape continued indeed in vigorous existence for centuries, but it was almost always found associated with grave abuses. It might have been innocent and useful so long as Christian love continued to burn with the fervour of apostolic days, though even then, as Corinth showed, there were lurking dangers in it; but when we reach the fourth and fifth centuries we find council after council denouncing the evils of the Agape, and restricting its celebration with such effect that during the Middle Ages it ceased to exist as a distinctive Christian ordinance.<sup>1</sup> The change of the Holy Communion to the earlier portion of the day took almost universal effect, and that from the earliest times. Tertullian (*De Corona*, iii.) testifies that in his time the Eucharist was received before daybreak, though Christ had instituted it at a meal-time. Cyprian witnesses to the same usage in his sixty-third Epistle, where he speaks of Christ as instituting the Sacrament in the evening, that "the very hour of the sacrifice might intimate the evening of the world," but then describes himself as "celebrating the resurrection of the Lord in the morning."<sup>2</sup> St. Augustine, as quoted above, writing

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<sup>1</sup> See the exhaustive article on Agapæ in Smith's *Dict. Christ. Antiqq.*, vol. i., p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> The early Christians celebrated the Holy Communion in memory of Christ's resurrection as much as in memory of His death. The resurrection of Christ was, in fact, the central point of their belief and thought. This alone would have conduced to the practice of early morning communion, even before day, inasmuch as it was at that time the resurrection took place. Cf. *Dict. Christ. Antiqq.*, vol. i., p. 419, on the hours of celebration of the Holy Communion. On p. 41 of the same volume the writer of the article on the Agapæ makes an extraordinary statement that it was only at the third Council of Carthage,



about 400, speaks of fasting communion as the general rule ; so general, indeed, that he regards it as having come down from apostolic appointment. At the same time St. Augustine recognises the time of its original institution, and mentions the custom of the African Church which once a year had an evening communion on Thursday before Easter in remembrance of the Last Supper and of our Lord's action in connection with it. My own feeling on the matter is, that early fasting communion when there is health and strength is far the most edifying. There is an element of self-denial about it, and the more real self-denial there is about our worship the more blessed will that worship be. A worship that costs nothing in mind, body, or estate is but a very poor thing to offer unto the Lord of the universe. But there is no ground either in Holy Scripture or the history of the primitive Church justifying an attempt to put a yoke on the neck of the disciples which they cannot bear and to teach that fasting communion is binding upon all Christians. St. Augustine speaks most strongly in a passage we have already referred to (*Epist. cxviii., Ad Januar.*) about the benefit of fasting communion ; but he admits the lawfulness of non-fasting participation, as does also that great Greek divine St. Chrysostom, who quotes the examples of St. Paul and of our Lord Himself in justification of such a course.<sup>1</sup>

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A.D. 391, that the time of Eucharistic celebration was changed to the morning, and that then the Agape was first separated from the Holy Communion. The change and the separation had taken place in Pliny's time, as I have already shown.

<sup>1</sup> This whole subject of fasting communion is discussed at length with all the authorities duly given in Bingham's *Antiquities*, Book XV. ch. vii. sec. 8, whence I have taken my references, and where he quotes Bishop Fell's Notes on Cyprian, *Epist. lxiii.* p. 156, who says that

The celebration of the Eucharist was not the only subject which engaged St. Paul's attention at Troas. He preached unto the people as well; and following his example we find from Justin Martyr's narrative that preaching was an essential part of the communion office in the days immediately following the apostles' age; and then, descending to lower times still, we know that preaching is an equally essential portion of the eucharistic service in the Western Church, the only formal provision for a sermon according to the English liturgy being the rubric in the service for the Holy Communion, which lays down that after the Nicene Creed, "Then shall follow the sermon or one of the Homilies already set forth, or hereafter to be set forth, by authority." St. Paul's discourse was no mere mechanical homily, however. He was not what man regarded as a powerful, but he was a ready speaker, and one who carried his hearers away by the rapt intense earnestness of his manner. His whole soul was full of his subject. He was convinced that this was his last visit to the churches of Asia. He foresaw too a thousand dangers to which they would be exposed after his departure, and he therefore prolonged his sermon far into the night, so far indeed that human nature asserted its claims upon a young man named Eutychus, who sat in a window of the room where they were assembled. Human nature indeed was never for a moment absent from these primitive Church assemblies. If it was absent in one shape, it was present in another, just as really as in our modern congregations, and so Eutychus fell fast asleep under the

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"the custom of communicating after supper lasted for a long time in the Church": cf. Socrates, *H. E.*, v. 22, and the *Dict. Christ. Antiqq.*, vol. i., p. 417, on *Fasting Reception of H. C.*

heart-searching exhortations of an inspired apostle, even as men fall asleep under less powerful sermons of smaller men; and as the natural result, sitting in a window left open for the sake of ventilation, he fell down into the courtyard, and was taken up apparently lifeless. St. Paul was not put out, however. He took interruptions in his work as the Master took them. He was not upset by them, but he seized them, utilised them, and then, having extracted the sweetness and blessedness which they brought with them, he returned from them back to his interrupted work. St. Paul descended to Eutychus, found him in a lifeless state, and then restored him. Men have disputed whether the Apostle worked a miracle on this occasion, or merely perceived that the young man was in a temporary faint. I do not see that it makes any matter which opinion we form. St. Paul's supernatural and miraculous powers stand on quite an independent ground, no matter what way we decide this particular case. It seems to me indeed from the language of St. Paul—"Make ye no ado; for his life is in him"—that the young man had merely fainted, and that St. Paul recognised this fact as soon as he touched him. But if any one has strong opinions on the opposite side I should be sorry to spend time disputing a question which has absolutely no evidential bearing. The great point is, that Eutychus was restored, that St. Paul's long sermon was attended by no fatal consequences, and that the Apostle has left us a striking example showing how that, with pastors and people alike, intense enthusiasm, high-strung interest in the affairs of the spiritual world, can enable human nature to rise superior to all human wants, and prove itself master even of the conquering powers of sleep: "And when he was gone

up, and had broken the bread, and eaten, and had talked with them a long while, even till break of day, so he departed."

We know nothing of what the particular topics were which engaged St. Paul's attention at Troas, but we may guess them from the subject-matter of the address to the elders of Ephesus, which takes up the latter half of this twentieth chapter. Troas and Ephesus, in fact, were so near and so similarly circumstanced that the dangers and trials of both must have been much alike. He next passed from Troas to Miletus. This is a considerable journey along the western shore of Asia Minor. St. Paul was eagerly striving to get to Jerusalem by Pentecost, or by Whitsuntide, as we should say. He had left Philippi after Easter, and now there had elapsed more than a fortnight of the seven weeks which remained available for the journey to Jerusalem. How often St. Paul must have chafed against the manifold delays of the trading vessel in which he sailed; how frequently he must have counted the days to see if sufficient time remained to execute his purpose! St. Paul, however, was a rigid economist of time. He saved every fragment of it as carefully as possible. It was thus with him at Troas. The ship in which he was travelling left Troas early in the morning. It had to round a promontory in its way to the port of Assos, which could be reached direct by St. Paul in half the time. The Apostle therefore took the shorter route, while St. Luke and his companions embarked on board the vessel. St. Paul evidently chose the land route because it gave him a time of solitary communion with God and with himself. He felt, in fact, that the perpetual strain upon his spiritual nature demanded special spiritual support and refreshment,

which could only be obtained in the case of one who led such a busy life by seizing upon every such occasion as then offered for meditation and prayer. St. Paul left Troas some time on Sunday morning. He joined the ship at Assos, and after three days' coasting voyage landed at Miletus on Wednesday, whence he despatched a messenger summoning the elders of the Church of Ephesus to meet him.<sup>1</sup> The ship was evidently to make a delay of several days at Miletus. We conclude this from the following reason. Miletus is a town separated by a distance of thirty miles from Ephesus. A space therefore of at least two days would be required in order to secure the presence of the Ephesian elders. If a messenger—St. Luke, for instance—started immediately on St. Paul's arrival at Miletus, no matter how quickly he travelled, he could not arrive at Miletus sooner than Thursday at midday. The work of collecting the elders and making known to them the apostolic summons would take up the afternoon at least, and then the journey to Ephesus either by land or water must have occupied the whole of Friday. It is very possible that the sermon recorded in this twentieth of Acts was delivered on the Sabbath, which, as we have noted above, was as yet kept sacred by Christians as well as by Jews, or else upon the Lord's Day, when, as upon that day week at Troas, the elders of Ephesus had assembled with the Christians of Miletus in order to commemorate the Lord's resurrection.

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<sup>1</sup> The *Lives of St. Paul* by Lewin and by Conybeare and Howson enter into minute computations as to the days of the month upon which the Apostle touched at the various towns mentioned in the Acts. I can now merely refer the reader to these works for such details about St. Paul's life, as they scarcely come within the scope of an expositor's duty.

We have already pointed out that we know not the subject of St. Paul's sermon at Troas, but we do know the topics upon which he enlarged at Miletus, and we may conclude that, considering the circumstances of the time, they must have been much the same as those upon which he dwelt at Troas. Some critics have found fault with St. Paul's sermon as being quite too much taken up with himself and his own vindication. But they forget the peculiar position in which St. Paul was placed, and the manner in which the truth of the gospel was then associated in the closest manner with St. Paul's own personal character and teaching. The Apostle was just then assailed all over the Christian world wherever he had laboured, and even sometimes where he was only known by name, with the most frightful charges ; ambition, pride, covetousness, deceit, lying, all these things and much more were imputed to him by his opponents who wished to seduce the Gentiles from that simplicity and liberty in Christ into which he had led them. Corinth had been desolated by such teachers ; Galatia had succumbed to them ; Asia was in great peril. St. Paul therefore, foreseeing future dangers, warned the shepherds of the flock at Ephesus against the machinations of his enemies, who always began their preliminary operations by making attacks upon St. Paul's character. This sufficiently explains the apologetic tone of St. Paul's address, of which we have doubtless merely a brief and condensed abstract indicating the subjects of a prolonged conversation with the elders of Ephesus, Miletus, and such neighbouring churches as could be gathered together. We conclude that St. Paul's conference on this occasion must have been a long one for this reason. If St. Paul could find matter sufficient to engage his attention for a whole

night, from sundown till sunrise, in a place like Troas, where he had laboured but a very short time, how much more must he have found to say to the presbyters of the numerous congregations which must have been flourishing at Ephesus where he had laboured for years with such success as to make Christianity a prominent feature in the social and religious life of that idolatrous city !

Let us now notice some of the topics of this address. It may be divided into four portions. The first part is retrospective, and autobiographical ; the second is prospective, and sets forth his conception of his future course ; the third is hortatory, expounding the dangers threatening the Ephesian Church ; and the fourth is valedictory.

I. We have the biographical portion. He begins his discourse by recalling to the minds of his hearers his own manner of life,—“Ye yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, after what manner I was with you all the time, serving the Lord with all lowliness of mind, and with tears, and with trials which befell me by the plots of the Jews” ; words which show us that from the earliest portion of his ministry at Ephesus, and as soon as they realised the meaning of his message, the Jews had become as hostile to the Apostle at Ephesus as they had repeatedly shown themselves at Corinth, again and again making attempts upon his life. The foundations indeed of the Ephesian Church were laid in the synagogue during the first three months of his work, as we are expressly told in ch. xix. 8 ; but the Ephesian Church must have been predominantly Gentile in its composition, or else the language of Demetrius must have been exaggerated and the riot raised by him meaningless.



How could Demetrius have said, "Ye see that at Ephesus this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods which are made with hands," unless the vast majority of his converts were drawn from the ranks of those pagans who worshipped Diana? These words also show us that during his extended ministry at Ephesus he was left at peace by the heathen. St. Paul here makes no mention of trials experienced from pagan plots. He speaks of the Jews alone as making assaults upon his work or his person, incidentally confirming the statement of ch. xix. 23, that it was only when he was purposing to retire from Ephesus, and during the celebration of the Artemisian games which marked his last days there, that the opposition of the pagans developed itself in a violent shape.

St. Paul begins his address by fixing upon Jewish opposition outside the Church as his great trial at Ephesus, just as the same kind of opposition inside the Church had been his great trial at Corinth, and was yet destined to be a source of trial to him in the Ephesian Church itself, as we can see from the Pastoral Epistles. He then proceeds to speak of the doctrines he had taught and how he had taught them; reminding them "how that I shrank not from declaring unto you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and Greeks repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." St. Paul sets forth his manner of teaching. He taught publicly, and public teaching was most effective in his case, because he came armed with a double power, the powers of spiritual and of intellectual preparation. St. Paul was not a man who thought that prayer and

spiritual life could dispense with thought and mental culture. Or again, he would be the last to tolerate the idea that diligent visitation from house to house would make up for the neglect of that public teaching which he so constantly and so profitably practised. Public preaching and teaching, pastoral visitation and work, are two distinct branches of labour, which at various periods of the Church's history have been regarded in very different lights. St. Paul evidently viewed them as equally important, the tendency in the present age is, however, to decry and neglect preaching and to exalt pastoral work—including under that head Church services—out of its due position. This is, indeed, a great and lamentable mistake. The "teaching publicly" to which St. Paul refers is the only opportunity which the majority of men possess of hearing the authorised ministers of religion, and if the latter neglect the office of public preaching, and think the fag end of a week devoted to external and secular labours and devoid of any mental study and preparation stirring the soul and refreshing the spirit, to be quite sufficient for pulpit preparation, they cannot be surprised if men come to despise the religion that is presented in such a miserable light and by such inefficient ambassadors.<sup>1</sup>

St. Paul insists in this passage on the publicity and boldness of his teaching. There was no secrecy about

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<sup>1</sup> I do not think there is any greater want in the Church of England than the revival of preaching. It is simply lamentable to see the numbers who under usual circumstances will walk out of church before the sermon, and still more lamentable to see the number of men who do not go to church at all. This I attribute to the low estate to which the ordinary sermon has fallen. In the days of evangelical supremacy the pulpit may have been unduly exalted; now it is unduly neglected, and with terrible results.

him, no hypocrisy; he did not come pretending one view or one line of doctrine, and then, having stolen in secretly, teaching a distinct system. In this passage, which may seem laudatory of his own methods, St. Paul is, in fact, warning against the underhand and hypocritical methods adopted by the Judaising party, whether at Antioch, Galatia, or Corinth. In this division of his sermon St. Paul then sets forth the doctrines which were the sum and substance of the teaching which he had given both publicly and from house to house. They were repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, and that not only in the case of the Jews, but also of the Greeks. Now here we shall miss the implied reference of St. Paul, unless we emphasize the words "I shrank not from declaring unto you anything that was profitable." His Judaising opponents thought there were many other things profitable for men besides these two points round which St. Paul's teaching turned. They regarded circumcision and Jewish festivals, washings and sacrifices, as very necessary and very profitable for the Gentiles; while, as far as the Jews were concerned, they thought that the doctrines on which St. Paul insisted might possibly be profitable, but were not at all necessary. St. Paul impresses by his words the great characteristic differences between the Ebionite view of Christ and of Christianity and that catholic view which has regenerated society and become a source of life and light to the human race.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I think I hear in St. Paul's words in this passage an echo of the Epistle to the Romans which he had written a month or two previously. The idea, "Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ," as the essence of Christianity is the central idea of that Epistle.

II. We have, then, the prospective portion of his discourse. St. Paul announces his journey to Jerusalem, and professes his ignorance of his fate there. He was warned merely by the testimony of the Holy Spirit that bonds and afflictions were his portion in every city. He was prepared for them, however, and for death itself, so that he might accomplish the ministry with which the Lord Jesus Christ had put him in trust. He concluded this part of his address by expressing his belief that he would never see them again. His work among them was done, and he called them to witness that he was pure from the blood of all men, seeing that he had declared unto them the whole counsel of God. This passage has given rise to much debate, because of St. Paul's statement that he knew that he should never see them again, while the Epistles to Timothy and that to Titus prove that after St. Paul's first imprisonment, with the notice of which this book of the Acts ends, he laboured for several years in the neighbourhood of Asia Minor, and paid lengthened visits to Ephesus.

We cannot now bestow space in proving this point, which will be found fully discussed in the various Lives of St. Paul which we have so often quoted : as, for instance, in Lewin, vol. ii., p. 94, and in Conybeare and Howson, vol. ii., p. 547. We shall now merely indicate the line of proof for this. In the Epistle to Philemon, ver. 22, written during his first Roman imprisonment, and therefore years subsequent to this address, he indicates his expectation of a speedy deliverance from his bonds, and his determination to travel eastward to Colossæ, where Philemon lived (cf. Philippians i. 25, ii. 24). He then visited Ephesus, where he left Timothy, who had been his companion in the latter

portion of his Roman imprisonment (cf. Philem. 1 and 1 Tim. i. 3), expecting soon to return to him in the same city (1 Tim. iii. 14); while again in 2 Tim. i. 18 he speaks of Onesiphorus having ministered to himself in Ephesus, and then in the same Epistle (ch. iv. 20), written during his second Roman imprisonment, he speaks of having just left Trophimus at Miletus sick. This brief outline, which can be followed up in the volumes to which we have referred, and especially in Appendix II. in Conybeare and Howson on the date of the Pastoral Epistles, must suffice to prove that St. Paul was expressing a mere human expectation when he told the Ephesian elders that he should see their faces no more. St. Luke, in fact, thus shows us that St. Paul was not omniscient in his knowledge, and that the inspiration which he possessed did not remove him, as some persons think, out of the category of ordinary men or free him from their infirmities. The Apostle was, in fact, supernaturally inspired upon occasions. The Holy Ghost now and again illuminated the darkness of the future when such illumination was necessary for the Church's guidance; but on other occasions St. Paul and his brother apostles were left to the guidance of their own understandings and to the conclusions and expectations of common sense, else why did not St. Peter and St. John read the character of Ananias and Sapphira or of Simon Magus before their sins were committed? why did St. Peter know nothing of his deliverance from Herod's prison-house before the angel appeared, when his undissembled surprise is sufficient evidence that he had no expectation of any such rescue? These instances, which might be multiplied abundantly out of St. Paul's career and writings, show us that St. Paul's confident statement in

this passage was a mere human anticipation which was disappointed by the course of events. The supernatural knowledge of the apostles ran on precisely the same lines as their supernatural power. God bestowed them both for use according as He saw fit and beneficial, but not for common ordinary every-day purposes, else why did St. Paul leave Trophimus at Miletus sick, or endure the tortures of his own ophthalmia, or exhort Timothy to take a little wine on account of his bodily weakness, if he could have healed them all by his miraculous power? Before we leave this point we may notice that here we have an incidental proof of the early date of the composition of the Acts. St. Luke, as we have often maintained, wrote this book about the close of St. Paul's first imprisonment. Assuredly if he had written it at a later period, and above all, if he wrote it twenty years later, he would have either modified the words of his synopsis of St. Paul's speech, or else given us a hint that subsequent events had shown that the Apostle was mistaken in his expectations, a thing which he could easily have done, because he cherished none of these extreme notions about St. Paul's office and dignity which have led some to assume that it was impossible for him ever to make a mistake about the smallest matters.<sup>1</sup>

III. This discourse, again, is hortatory, and its exhortations contain very important doctrinal statements. St. Paul begins this third division with an exhortation like that which our Lord gave to His apostles under the same circumstances, "Take heed unto yourselves." The Apostle never forgot that an effective ministry of souls must be based on deep personal knowledge

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<sup>1</sup> See on this point Dr. Salmon's *Introduction to New Testament*, 4th ed., p. 445.



of the things of God. He knew, too, from his own experience that it is very easy to be so completely taken up with the care of other men's souls and the external work of the Church, as to forget that inner life which can only be kept alive by close communion with God. Then, having based his exhortations on their own spiritual life, he exhorts the elders to diligence in the pastoral office: "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in the which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops, to feed the Church of God, which He purchased with His own blood." St. Paul in these words shows us his estimate of the ministerial office. The elders of Ephesus had been all ordained by St. Paul himself with the imposition of hands, a rite that has ever been esteemed essential to ordination. It was derived from the Jewish Church, and was perpetuated into the Christian Church by that same spirit of conservatism, that law of continuity which in every department of life enacts that everything shall continue as it was unless there be some circumstance to cause an alteration.<sup>1</sup> Now there was no cause for alteration in this case; nay, rather there was every reason to bring about a continuance of this custom, because imposition of hands indicates for the people the persons ordained, and assures the ordained themselves that they have been individually chosen and set apart. But St. Paul by

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<sup>1</sup> This rule or law is the principle of Butler's great argument for a future life in the first chapter of his *Analogy*. He expressly states in the following words, "There is in every case a probability that things will continue as we experience they are, in all respects, except those in which we have some reason to think they will be altered. This is that kind of presumption of probability from analogy expressed in the word continuance which seems our only natural reason for believing the course of the world will continue to-morrow as it has done so far back as our experience or knowledge of history can carry us back."



these words teaches us a higher and nobler view of the ministry. He teaches us that he was himself but the instrument of a higher power, and that the imposition of hands was the sign and symbol to the ordained that the Holy Ghost had chosen them and appointed them to feed the flock of God. St. Paul here shows that in ordination, as in the sacraments, we should by faith look away beyond and behind the human instrument, and view the actions of the Church of Christ as the very operations and manifestations in the world of time and sense of the Holy Ghost Himself, the Lord and Giver of life. He teaches the Ephesian elders, in fact, exactly what he taught the Corinthian Church some few months earlier, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves" (2 Cor. iv. 7); the treasure and the power were everything, the only things, in fact, worth naming, the earthen vessels which contained them for a little time were nothing at all. How awful, solemn, heart-searching a view of the ministerial office this was! How sustaining a view when its holders are called upon to discharge functions for which they feel themselves all inadequate in their natural strength! Is it any wonder that the Church, taking the same view as St. Paul did, has ever held and taught that the ministerial office thus conferred by supernatural power is no mere human function to be taken up or laid down at man's pleasure, but is a life-long office to be discharged at the holder's peril,—a savour of life unto life for the worthy recipient, a savour of death unto death for the unworthy and the careless.

In connexion with this statement made by St. Paul concerning the source of the ministry we find a title

given to the Ephesian presbyters round which much controversy has centred. St. Paul says, "Take heed unto the flock, over which the Holy Ghost has made you *bishops*." I do not, however, propose to spend much time over this topic, as all parties are now agreed that in the New Testament the term presbyter and bishop are interchangeable and applied to the same persons.<sup>1</sup> The question to be decided is not about a

<sup>1</sup> Irenæus, however, writing in the second century, states that the bishops and presbyters of Ephesus and the neighbouring cities were assembled at Miletus, so that he distinguishes between bishops and presbyters even on this occasion: see his work *Against Heresies*, iii. 14. Dr. Hatch had an extraordinary theory, which he elaborates in his article "Priest" in the *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*, vol. ii., p. 1700. He thus states it: "Whether the institution of Presbyters existed in the first instance outside the limits of the Judæo-Christian communities is doubtful. There is no evidence that it did so; the presumption is that it did not, for when St. Paul, writing to the churches which were presumably non-Jewish in their character, recognises the existence of church officers, he designates them by other names: *προϊστάμενοι* (1 Thess. v. 12), *ἐπίσκοποι* (Philip. i. 1)." To put it briefly, his idea is that bishop as a title was confined to predominantly Greek communities, and presbyter as a title was confined to predominantly Gentile communities. Will this theory and the instances he gives stand the test of facts? Philippi was, he thinks, a predominantly Gentile Church, so thoroughly Gentile that its members would necessarily prefer titles drawn from impure pagan sources rather than from Judaism. But was Philippi so thoroughly Gentile? If so, why did St. Paul stay there and celebrate the days of unleavened bread and the passover, as we have above noted? A large element in the church must have been Jewish when this happened. Again, take Thessalonica. We have already noted that the majority of that church must have been Gentile in origin; but there must have been a large and influential minority Jewish by race in a town where the Jews were so large an element in the population. Again, we find the title presbyter applied to the church officials of Ephesus. Dr. Hatch on the same page enumerates Ephesus among the Judæo-Christian communities, one, therefore, which would presumably prefer Jewish titles for its clergy. But was it predominantly Jewish? St. Paul laboured three months in the synagogue at Ephesus, and was then expelled. He laboured

name, but about an office, whether, in fact, any persons succeeded in apostolic times to the office of rule and government exercised by St. Paul and the rest of the apostles, as well as by Timothy, Titus, and the other delegates of the Apostle, and whether the term bishop, as used in the second century, was applied to such successors of the apostles.<sup>1</sup> This, however, is not a

there for two years among the Gentiles with such success, that Demetrius describes him as having turned away all Asia from Diana's worship. Surely if ever there was a Gentile Christian Church it was Ephesus! (Cf. Ephes. ii. and iii., where the Gentile character of the Ephesian Church is expressly asserted.) Yet here we have the title presbyter in use. Dr. Hatch's is not scientific historical reasoning, but the exercise of what Bishop Butler well designates, that delusive faculty called man's imagination and fancy. Upon this whole question of the origin of Christian presbyters, I may notice an exhaustive Biblical inquiry, called "The Ruling Elder," by the Rev. Robert King of Ballymena, the learned author of a well-known Irish Church History. It appeared after this chapter was written.

<sup>1</sup> In the second century bishops were often called presbyters, though presbyters were not called bishops, or, to quote Bishop Lightfoot, "Essay on the Ministry," *Philippians*, p. 226: "In the language of Irenæus, a presbyter is never designated a bishop, while on the other hand he very frequently speaks of a bishop as a presbyter." This usage long continued in the Church. Cyprian often expresses himself thus: cf. article on word "Senior" in *Dict. Christ. Antiqq.* Many instances of it occur in the literature of the early Celtic Church in Ireland, which was an offshoot of the Gallican Church and, through Gaul, of the Church of Western Asia Minor. In fact, this custom of calling bishops seniors or presbyters was used in Ireland till the twelfth century: see Ussher's Works, Ed. Elrington, vi. 517, 528. St. Bernard, for instance, in his Life of St. Malachy, calls the Bishop of Lismore "Senior Lesmorensis." I do not, as I have said, propose to enter any further into the debateable subject of Church government; but as I have come across this passage, and as I have already announced that I am writing this commentary as a decided Churchman, I may be permitted to state my own views, as history seems to me to set them forth, without entering into any discussion on the point. During the apostolic age the terms bishop and presbyter were interchangeable. As the apostles passed away, they seem to me to have established

question which comes directly within the purview of an expositor of the Acts of the Apostles, as the appointment of Timothy and Titus to manage the affairs of the Church in Ephesus and in Crete lies beyond the period covered by the text of the Acts, and properly belongs to the commentary on the Pastoral Epistles. St. Paul's words in this connexion have, however, an important bearing on fundamental doctrinal questions connected with the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. St. Paul speaks of the presbyters as called "to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood." These words are very strong, so strong indeed that various readings have been put forward to mitigate their force. Some have read "Lord" instead of "God," others have substituted Christ for it; but the Revised Version, following the text of Westcott and Hort, have accepted the strongest form of the verse on purely critical ground, and translates it as "the

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Episcopacy as the normal rule of the Church, though, doubtless, it was only by degrees that the title of bishop was appropriated to the office so created. By the time of Ignatius, that is, about 110 A.D., this appropriation was complete. As regards my authority for saying the apostles established Episcopacy, I simply appeal to Irenæus, who, in his great work against Heresies, Book III., ch. iii., states in section i. that "the apostles instituted bishops in the churches," and then in sec. 3 proceeds to trace the line of these bishops in the Roman Church, beginning with Linus, "into whose hands the blessed apostles committed the office of the Episcopate." Now it is upon Irenæus we largely depend for the proof of the canon of the New Testament and the Johannine origin of the Fourth Gospel. Surely if Irenæus is a witness sufficient to establish the apostolic origin of the Gospels, he should be quite sufficient to establish the apostolic origin of Episcopacy! If Irenæus is a competent witness to the true authorship of an anonymous document like the Fourth Gospel, he is surely competent to tell us of the true origin of a worldwide institution like Episcopacy. It is assuredly much easier to learn the origin of institutions than of documents.

Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood." This passage, then, is decisive as to the Christological views of St. Luke and the Pauline circle generally. They believed so strongly in the deity of Jesus Christ and His essential unity with the Father that they hesitated not to speak of His sacrifice on Calvary as a shedding of the blood of God, an expression which some fifty years afterwards we find in the Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians, where St. Ignatius speaks of them as "kindled into living fire by the blood of God," and a hundred years later still, in Tertullian, *Ad Uxor.*, ii. 3. This passage has been used in scientific theology as the basis of a principle or theory called the "Communicatio Idiomatum," a theory which finds an illustration in two other notable passages of Scripture, St. John iii. 13 and 1 Cor. ii. 8. In the former passage our Lord says of Himself, "No man hath ascended into heaven, but He that descended out of heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven," where the Son of man is spoken of as in heaven as well as upon earth at the same time, though the Son of man, according to His humanity, could only be in one place at a time. In the second passage St. Paul says, "Which none of the rulers of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory," where crucifixion is attributed to the Lord of Glory, a title derived from His Divine nature. Now the term "Communicatio Idiomatum," or "transference of peculiar properties," is given to this usage because in all these texts the properties of the nature pertaining either to God or to man are spoken of as if they belonged to the other; or, to put it far better in the stately language of Hooker, v. liii. where he speaks of "those cross and circulatory speeches wherein there are attributed to

God such things as belong to manhood, and to man such as properly concern the deity of Jesus Christ, the cause whereof is the association of natures in one subject. A kind of mutual commutation there is, whereby those concrete names, God and man, when we speak of Christ, do take interchangeably one another's room, so that for truth of speech it skilleth not whether we say that the Son of God hath created the world and the Son of man by His death hath saved it, or else that the Son of man did create and the Son of God die to save the world." This is a subject of profound speculative and doctrinal interest, not only in connexion with the apostolic view of our Lord's Person, but also in reference to the whole round of methodised and scientific theology. We cannot, however, afford further space for this subject. We must be content to have pointed it out as an interesting topic of inquiry, and, merely referring the reader to Hooker and to Liddon's Bampton Lectures (Lect. V.) for more information, must hurry on to a conclusion. St. Paul terminates this part of his discourse with expressing his belief in the rapid development of false doctrines and false guides as soon as his repressive influence shall have been removed; a belief which the devout student of the New Testament will find to have been realised when in 1 Tim. i. 20, in 2 Tim. i. 15, and ii. 17, 18 he finds the Apostle warning the youthful Bishop of Ephesus against Phygelus and Hermogenes, who had turned all Asia away from St. Paul, and against Hymenæus, Philetus, and Alexander, who had imbibed the Gnostic error concerning matter, which had already led the Corinthians to deny the future character of the Resurrection. St. Paul then terminates his discourse with a solemn commendation of the Ephesian elders to



that Divine grace which is as necessary for an apostle as for the humblest Christian. He exhorts them to self-sacrifice and self-denial, reminding them of his own example, having supported himself and his companions by his labour as a tentmaker at Ephesus, and above all of the words of the Lord Jesus, which they apparently knew from some source which has not come down to us, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

When the Apostle had thus terminated his address, which doubtless was a very lengthened one, he knelt down, probably on the shore, as we shall find him kneeling in the next chapter (xxi. 5, 6) on the shore at Tyre. He then commended them in solemn prayer to God, and they all parted in deep sorrow on account of the final separation which St. Paul's words indicated as imminent; for though the primitive Christians believed in the reality of the next life with an intensity of faith of which we have no conception, and longed for its peace and rest, yet they gave free scope to those natural affections which bind men one to another according to the flesh and were sanctified by the Master Himself when He wept by the grave of Lazarus. Christianity is not a religion of stoical apathy, but of sanctified human affections.



## CHAPTER XVII.

### *A PRISONER IN BONDS.*

“ Having found a ship crossing over unto Phœnicia, we went aboard, and set sail. . . . We sailed unto Syria, and landed at Tyre : for there the ship was to unload her burden. . . . When we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. . . . Then the chief captain came near, and laid hold on him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains ; and inquired who he was, and what he had done. . . . But Paul said, I am a Jew, of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city : and I beseech thee, give me leave to speak unto the people.”—ACTS xxi. 2, 3, 17, 33, 39, 40.

“ And they gave him audience unto this word ; and they lifted up their voice, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth : for it is not fit that he should live. . . . But on the morrow, desiring to know the certainty, wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him, and commanded the chief priests and all the council to come together, and brought Paul down, and set him before them.”—ACTS xxii. 22, 30.

“ And after five days the high priest Ananias came down with certain elders, and with an orator, one Tertullus ; and they informed the governor against Paul.”—ACTS xxiv. 1.

“ And Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth his hand, and made his defence.”—ACTS xxvi. 1.

THE title we have given to this chapter, “ A Prisoner in Bonds,” expresses the central idea of the last eight chapters of the Acts. Twenty years and more had now elapsed since St. Paul’s conversion on the road to Damascus. These twenty years had been times of unceasing and intense activity. Now we come to some five years when the external labours, the turmoil and the cares of active life, have to be put aside,

and St. Paul was called upon to stand apart and learn the lesson which every-day experience teaches to all,—how easily the world can get along without us, how smoothly God's designs fulfil themselves without our puny assistance. The various passages we have placed at the head of this chapter cover six chapters of the Acts, from the twenty-first to the twenty-sixth. It may seem a large extent of the text to be comprised within the limits of one of our chapters, but it must be remembered that a great deal of the space thus included is taken up with the narrative of St. Paul's conversion, which is twice set forth at great length, first to the multitude from the stairs of the tower of Antonia, and then in his defence which he delivered before Agrippa and Bernice and Festus, or else with the speeches delivered by him before the assembled Sanhedrin and before Felix the governor, wherein he dwells on points previously and sufficiently discussed.<sup>1</sup> We have already considered the narrative of the Apostle's conversion at great length, and noted the particular directions in which St. Paul's own later versions at Jerusalem and Cæsarea throw light upon St. Luke's independent account. To the earlier chapters of this book we therefore would refer the reader who wishes to discuss St. Paul's conversion, and several of the other subjects which he introduces. Let us now, however, endeavour, first of all, to gather up into one connected story the tale of St. Paul's journeys, sufferings, and imprisonments from the time he left Miletus after his famous address till he set sail for Rome from the port of Cæsarea, a prisoner destined for the judg-

<sup>1</sup> Thus in ch. xxiv. 10-16 he enlarges upon the subject of "the Way which they call a sect," a topic and a name fully discussed above on pp. 32, 33.

ment-seat of Nero. This narrative will embrace from at least the summer of A.D. 58, when he was arrested at Jerusalem, to the autumn of 60, when he set sail for Rome. This connected story will enable us to see the close union of the various parts of the narrative which is now hidden from us because of the division into chapters, and will enable us to fix more easily upon the leading points which lend themselves to the purposes of an expositor.

I. St. Paul, after parting from the Ephesian Church, embarked on board his ship, and then coasted along the western shore of Asia Minor for three days, sailing amid scenery of the most enchanting description, specially in that late spring or early summer season at which the year had then arrived. It was about the first of May, and all nature was bursting into new life, when even hearts, the hardest and least receptive of external influences, feel as if they were living a portion of their youth over again. And even St. Paul, rapt away in the contemplation of things unseen, must have felt himself touched by the beauty of the scenes through which he was passing, though St. Luke tells us nothing but the bare succession of events. Three days after leaving Miletus the sacred company reached Patara, a town at the south-western corner of Asia Minor, where the coast begins to turn round towards the east. Here St. Paul found a trading ship sailing direct to Tyre and Palestine, and therefore with all haste transferred himself and his party into it. The ship seems to have been on the point of sailing, which suited St. Paul so much the better, anxious as he was to reach Jerusalem in time for Pentecost. The journey direct from Patara to Tyre is about three hundred and fifty miles, a three days'

sail under favourable circumstances for the trading vessels of the ancients, and the circumstances were favourable. The north-west wind is to this day the prevailing wind in the eastern Mediterranean during the late spring and early summer season, and the north-west wind would be the most favourable wind for an ancient trader almost entirely depending on an immense main sail for its motive power. With such a wind the merchantmen of that age could travel at the rate of a hundred to a hundred and fifty miles a day, and would therefore traverse the distance between Patara and Tyre in three days, the time we have specified. When the vessel arrived at Tyre St. Paul sought out the local Christian congregation. The ship was chartered to bring a cargo probably of wheat or wine to Tyre, inasmuch as Tyre was a purely commercial city, and the territory naturally belonging to it was utterly unable to furnish it with necessary provisions, as we have already noted on the occasion of Herod Agrippa's death. A week, therefore, was spent in unloading the cargo, during which St. Paul devoted himself to the instruction of the local Christian Church. After a week's close communion with this eminent servant of God, the Tyrian Christians, like the elders of Ephesus and Miletus, with their wives and children accompanied him till they reached the shore, where they commended one another in prayer to God's care and blessing. From Tyre he sailed to Ptolemais, thirty miles distant. There again he found another Christian congregation, with whom he tarried one day, and then leaving the ship proceeded by the great coast road to Cæsarea, a town which he already knew right well, and to which he was so soon to return as a prisoner in bonds. At Cæsarea there must now have been a very

considerable Christian congregation. In Cæsarea Philip the Evangelist lived and ministered permanently. There too resided his daughters, eminent as teachers, and exercising in their preaching or prophetic functions a great influence among the very mixed female population of the political capital of Palestine. St. Paul and St. Luke abode in Cæsarea several days in the house of Philip the Evangelist. He did not wish to arrive in Jerusalem till close on the Feast of Pentecost, and owing to the fair winds with which he had been favoured he must have had a week or more to stay in Cæsarea. Here Agabus again appears upon the scene. Fourteen years before he had predicted the famine which led St. Paul to pay a visit to Jerusalem when bringing up the alms of the Antiochene Church to assist the poor brethren at Jerusalem, and now he predicts the Apostle's approaching captivity. The prospect moved the Church so much that the brethren besought St. Paul to change his mind and not enter the Holy City. But his mind was made up, and nothing would dissuade him from celebrating the Feast as he had all along proposed. He went up therefore to Jerusalem, lodging with Mnason, "an early disciple," as the Revised Version puts it, one therefore who traced his Christian convictions back probably to the celebrated Pentecost a quarter of a century earlier, when the Holy Ghost first displayed His supernatural power in converting multitudes of human souls. Next day he went to visit James, the Bishop of Jerusalem, who received him warmly, grasped his position, warned him of the rumours which had been industriously and falsely circulated as to his opposition to the Law of Moses, even in the case of born Jews, and gave him some prudent advice as to his course of action.

St. James recommended that St. Paul should unite himself with certain Christian Nazarites, and perform the Jewish rites usual in such cases.—A Nazarite, as we have already mentioned, when he took the Nazarite vow for a limited time after some special deliverance vouchsafed to him, allowed his hair to grow till he could cut it off in the Temple, and have it burned in the fire of the sacrifices offered up on his behalf. These sacrifices were very expensive, as will be seen at once by a reference to Numbers vi. 13-18, where they are prescribed at full length, and it was always regarded as a mark of patriotic piety when any stranger coming to Jerusalem offered to defray the necessary charges for the poorer Jews, and thus completed the ceremonies connected with the Nazarite vow. St. James advised St. Paul to adopt this course, to unite himself with the members of the local Christian Church who were unable to defray the customary expenses, to pay their charges, join with them in the sacrifices, and thus publicly proclaim to those who opposed him that, though he differed from them as regards the Gentiles, holding in that matter with St. James himself and with the apostles, yet as regards the Jews, whether at Jerusalem or throughout the world at large, he was totally misrepresented when men asserted that he taught the Jews to reject the Law of Moses. St. Paul was guided by the advice of James, and proceeded to complete the ceremonial prescribed for the Nazarites. This was the turning-point of his fate. Jerusalem was then thronged with strangers from every part of the world. Ephesus and the province of Asia, as a great commercial centre, and therefore a great Jewish resort, furnished a very large contingent.<sup>1</sup> To these, then,

<sup>1</sup> See Lightfoot's *Ignatius*, vol. i., p. 452, upon the presence of Jews

Paul was well known as an enthusiastic Christian teacher, toward whom the synagogues of Ephesus felt the bitterest hostility. They had often plotted against him at Ephesus, as St. Paul himself told the elders in his address at Miletus, but had hitherto failed to effect their purpose. Now, however, they seemed to see their chance. They thought they had a popular cry and a legal accusation under which he might be done to death under the forms of law. These Ephesian Jews had seen him in the city in company with Trophimus, an uncircumcised Christian, belonging to their own city, one therefore whose presence within the temple was a capital offence, even according to Roman law.<sup>1</sup> They raised a cry therefore that he had defiled the Holy Place by bringing into it an uncircumcised Greek; and thus roused the populace to seize the Apostle, drag him from the sacred precincts, and murder him. During the celebration of the Feasts the Roman sentinels, stationed upon the neighbouring tower of Antonia which overlooked the Temple courts, watched the assembled crowds most narrowly, apprehensive of

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in the towns and cities of Proconsular Asia. Antiochus the Great transported two thousand Jewish families to these parts from Babylonia and Mesopotamia.

<sup>1</sup> Inscriptions, according to Josephus, were graven in Greek and Latin on stones fixed in a wall or balustrade which ran round the Temple, warning the Gentiles not to enter on pain of death: see Josephus, *Wars*, V. v. 2; *Antiqq.*, XV. xi. 5. One of these stones was discovered some twenty years ago by M. Clermont Ganneau, with the inscription intact. It had been buried in the ground on the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem, where this learned Frenchman discovered it. A transcript of it can now be seen in Lewin's *St. Paul*, ii. 133. The inscription literally translated runs thus: "No alien to pass within the balustrade round the Temple and the inclosure. Whosoever shall be caught (so doing) must blame himself for the death that will ensue." This stone must often have been read by our Lord and His apostles, as they frequented the temple.



a riot. As soon therefore as the first symptoms of an outbreak occurred, the alarm was given, the chief captain Lysias hurried to the spot, and St. Paul was rescued for the moment. At the request of the Apostle, who was being carried up into the castle, he was allowed to address the multitude from the stairs. They listened to the narrative of his conversion very quietly till he came to tell of the vision God vouchsafed to him in the Temple some twenty years before, warning him to leave Jerusalem, when at the words "Depart, for I will send thee forth far hence unto the Gentiles," all their pent-up rage and pride and national jealousy burst forth anew. St. Paul had been addressing them in the Hebrew language which the chief captain understood not, and the mob probably expressed their rage and passion in the same language. The chief captain ordered St. Paul to be examined by flogging to know why they were so outrageous against him. More fortunate, however, on this occasion than at Philippi, he claimed his privilege as a Roman citizen, and escaped the torture. The chief captain was still in ignorance of the prisoner's crime, and therefore he brought him the very next day before the Sanhedrin, when St. Paul by a happy stroke caused such a division between the Sadducees and Pharisees that the chief captain was again obliged to intervene and rescue the prisoner from the contending factions. Next day, however, the Jews formed a conspiracy to murder the Apostle, which his nephew discovered and revealed to St. Paul and to Claudius Lysias, who that same night despatched him to Cæsarea.<sup>1</sup>

All these events, from his conference with James

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<sup>1</sup> It is very curious how perpetually St. Paul escaped the plots of the

to his arrival under guard at Cæsarea, cannot have covered more than eight days at the utmost, and yet the story of them extends from the middle of the twenty-first chapter to the close of the twenty-third, while the record of twelve months' hard work preaching, writing, organising is embraced within the first six verses of the twentieth chapter, showing how very different was St. Luke's narrative of affairs, according as he was present or absent when they were transacted.<sup>1</sup>

From the beginning of the twenty-fourth chapter to the close of the twenty-sixth is taken up with the account of St. Paul's trials, at first before Felix, and then before Festus, his successor in the procuratorship of Palestine. Just let us summarise the course of events and distinguish between them. St. Paul was despatched by Claudius Lysias to Felix accompanied by a letter in which he contrives to put the best construction on his own actions, representing himself as specially anxious about St. Paul because he was a Roman citizen, on which account indeed he describes himself as rescuing him from the clutches of the mob. After the lapse of five days St. Paul was brought up before Felix and accused by the Jews of three serious crimes in the eyes of Roman law as administered in Palestine. First, he was a mover of seditions among the Jews ;<sup>2</sup> second, a ringleader of a new sect, the

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Jews at Corinth, Ephesus, and elsewhere. At Corinth the plot formed was revealed as it would seem just as he was about to go on board his vessel (ch. xx. 3). Doubtless there were concealed Christians to whose ears the plots came and by whom they were revealed.

<sup>1</sup> See Lewin's *Fasti Sacri*, pp. 314-16, for an elaborate account of each day's proceedings, and a discussion of the various problems, chronological and otherwise, which they raise.

<sup>2</sup> The Romans were always afraid of Jewish seditions. Seven years

Nazarenes, unknown to Jewish law; and third, a profaner of the Temple, contrary to the law which the Romans themselves had sanctioned. On all these points Paul challenged investigation and demanded proof, asking where were the Jews from Asia who had accused him of profaning the Temple. The Jews doubtless thought that Paul was a common Jew, who would be yielded up to their clamour by the procurator, and knew nothing of his Roman citizenship. Their want of witnesses brought about their failure, but did not lead to St. Paul's release. He was committed to the custody of a centurion, and freedom of access was granted to his friends. In this state St. Paul continued two full years, from midsummer 58 to the same period of A.D. 60, when Felix was superseded by Festus. During these two years Felix often conversed with St. Paul. Felix was a thoroughly bad man. He exercised, as a historian of that time said of him, "the power of a king with the mind of a slave." He was tyrannical, licentious, and corrupt, and hoped to be bribed by St. Paul when he would have set him at liberty. At this period of his life St. Paul twice came in contact with the Herodian house which thenceforth disappears from sacred history. Felix about the period of St. Paul's arrest enticed Drusilla, the great-granddaughter of

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before St. Paul's imprisonment there had been a terrible outburst, in which Ananias the high priest had been himself involved, and which led to the despatch of Felix himself as procurator. He had effectually put down all disturbances, which led to the prolongation of his rule in Palestine for the very unusual period of eight years, from 52 to 60 A.D. This accounts for the words of Tertullus (ch. xxiv. 2): "Seeing that by thee we enjoy much peace, and that by thy providence evils are corrected for this nation." See Lewin's *Fasti*, pp. 296-98, 315, 320; Conybeare and Howson, ch. xxii. ; and for the latest authority, Schürer's *Geschichte des Jüdischen Volkes*, i. 477-83, ii. 170 (Leipzig, 1886).

Herod the Great, from her husband through the medium as many think, of Simon Magus. Drusilla was very young and very beautiful, and, like all the Herodian women, very wicked.<sup>1</sup> Felix was an open adulterer, therefore, and it is no wonder that when Paul reasoned before the guilty pair concerning righteousness, temperance, and the judgment to come, conscience should have smitten them and Felix should have trembled. St. Paul had another opportunity of bearing witness before this wicked and bloodstained family. Festus succeeded Felix as procurator of Palestine about June A.D. 60. Within the following month Agrippa II., the son of the Herod Agrippa who had died the terrible death at Cæsarea of which the twelfth chapter tells, came to Cæsarea to pay his respects unto the new governor. Agrippa was ruler of the kingdom of Chalcis, a district north of Palestine and about the Lebanon Range. He was accompanied by his sister Bernice, who afterwards became the mistress of Titus, the conqueror of Jerusalem in the last great siege. Festus had already heard St. Paul's case, and had allowed his appeal unto Cæsar. He wished, however, to have his case investigated before two Jewish experts, Agrippa and Bernice, who could instruct his own ignorance on the charges laid against him by the Jews, enabling him to write a more satisfactory report for the Emperor's guidance. He brought St. Paul therefore before them, and gave the great Christian champion another opportunity of bearing witness for his Master before a family which now for more than sixty years had been more or less mixed up, but never for their own blessing, with Christian history. After a period

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<sup>1</sup> Drusilla perished with her child by this union with Felix in the famous eruption of Vesuvius A.D. 79.

of two years and three months' detention, varied by different public appearances, St. Paul was despatched to Rome to stand his trial and make his defence before the Emperor Nero, whose name has become a synonym for vice, brutality, and self-will.

II. We have now given a connected outline of St. Paul's history extending over a period of more than two years. Let us omit his formal defences, which have already come under our notice, and take for our meditation a number of points which are peculiar to the narrative.

We have in the story of the voyage, arrest, and imprisonment of St. Paul, many circumstances which illustrate God's methods of action in the world, or else His dealings with the spiritual life. Let us take a few instances. First, then, we direct attention to the steady though quiet progress of the Christian faith as revealed in these chapters. St. Paul landed at Tyre, and from Tyre he proceeded some thirty miles south to Ptolemais, These are both of them towns which have never hitherto occurred in our narrative as places of Christian activity. St. Paul and St. Peter and Barnabas and the other active leaders of the Church must often have passed through these towns, and wherever they went they strove to make known the tidings of the gospel. But we hear nothing in the Acts, and tradition tells us nothing of when or by whom the Christian Church was founded in these localities.<sup>1</sup>

We get glimpses, too, of the ancient organisation of the Church, but only glimpses; we have no complete statement, because St. Luke was writing for a man who lived amidst it, and could supply the gaps which his in-

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<sup>1</sup> See my remarks in the next chapter on the case of the church at Puteoli, which St. Paul found flourishing there on his voyage to Rome.

formant left. The presbyters are mentioned at Miletus, and Agabus the prophet appeared at Antioch years before, and now again he appears at Cæsarea, where Philip the Evangelist and his daughters the prophetesses appear. Prophets and prophesying are not confined to Palestine and Antioch, though the Acts tells us nothing of them as existing elsewhere. The Epistle to Corinth shows us that the prophets occupied a very important place in that Christian community. Prophesying indeed was principally preaching at Corinth; but it did not exclude prediction, and that after the ancient Jewish method, by action as well as by word, for Agabus took St. Paul's girdle, and binding his own hands and feet declared that the Holy Ghost told him, "So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles."<sup>1</sup> But how little we know of the details of the upgrowth of the Church in all save the more prominent places! How entirely ignorant we are, for instance, of the methods by which the gospel spread to Tyre and Ptolemais and Puteoli! Here we find in the Acts the fulfilment of our Lord's words as reported in St. Mark iv. 26: "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth; . . . and the seed should spring up and grow, he knoweth not how." It was with the last and grander temple of God as it was with the first. Its foundations were laid, and its walls were built, not with sound of axe and hammer,

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<sup>1</sup> This prophecy was not literally fulfilled. The Jews did not bind St. Paul, nor deliver him into Gentile hands. The Romans took him out of Jewish hands, and bound him for their own purposes. The Jews, however, brought this binding about, and were the cause of his captivity in Roman hands. On the question of prophets and prophesying in the primitive Church, see Dr. Salmon's article on Hermas, in the *Dictionary of Christian Biography*, vol. ii., pp. 916-19.



but in the penitence of humbled souls, in the godly testimony of sanctified spirits, in the earnest lives of holy men hidden from the scoffing world, known only to the Almighty.

Again, we notice the advice given by James and the course actually adopted by St. Paul when he arrived at Jerusalem. It has the appearance of compromise of truth, and yet it has the appearance merely, not the reality of compromise. It was in effect wise and sound advice, and such as teaches lessons useful for our own guidance in life. We have already set forth St. Paul's conception of Jewish rites and ceremonies. They were nothing in the world one way or another, as viewed from the Divine standpoint. Their presence did not help on the work of man's salvation; their absence did not detract from it. The Apostle therefore took part in them freely enough, as when he celebrated the passover and the days of unleavened bread at Philippi, viewing them as mere national rites.<sup>1</sup> He had been successful in the very highest degree in converting to this view even the highest and strictest members of the Jerusalem Church. St. James, in advising St. Paul how to act on this occasion, when such prejudices had been excited against him, clearly shows that he had come round to St. Paul's view. He tells St. Paul that the multitude or body of the Judæo-Christian Church at Jerusalem had been excited against him, because they

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<sup>1</sup> St. Paul, writing twelve months earlier than his arrest, expressly lays down this principle in 1 Corinthians vii. 18-20: "Was any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Hath any been called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but the keeping of the commandments of God. Let each man abide in that calling wherein he was called."



had been informed that he taught the Jews of the Dispersion to forsake Moses, the very thing St. Paul did not do. St. James grasped, however, St. Paul's view that Moses and the Levitical Law might be good things for the Jews, but had no relation to the Gentiles, and must not be imposed on them. St. James had taught this view ten years earlier at the Apostolic Council. His opinions and teaching had percolated downwards, and the majority of the Jerusalem Church now held the same view as regards the Gentiles, but were as strong as ever and as patriotic as ever so far as the Jews were concerned, and the obligation of the Jewish Law upon them and their children. St. Paul had carried his point as regards Gentile freedom. And now there came a time when he had in turn to show consideration and care for Jewish prejudices, and act out his own principle that circumcision was nothing and uncircumcision was nothing. Concessions, in fact, were not to be all on one side, and St. Paul had now to make a concession. The Judæo-Christian congregations of Jerusalem were much excited, and St. Paul by a certain course of conduct, perfectly innocent and harmless, could pacify their excited patriotic feelings, and demonstrate to them that he was still a true, a genuine, and not a renegade Jew. It was but a little thing that St. James advised and public feeling demanded. He had but to join himself to a party of Nazarites and pay their expenses, and thus Paul would place himself *en rapport* with the Mother Church of Christendom. St. Paul acted wisely, charitably, and in a Christlike spirit when he consented to do as St. James advised. St. Paul was always eminently prudent. There are some religious men who seem to think that to advise a wise or prudent course is all the same

as to advise a wicked or unprincipled course. They seem to consider success in any course as a clear evidence of sin, and failure as a proof of honesty and true principle. Concession, however, is not the same as unworthy compromise. It is our duty in life to see and make our course of conduct as fruitful and as successful as possible. Concession on little points has a wondrous power in smoothing the path of action and gaining true success. Many an honest man ruins a good cause simply because he cannot distinguish, as St. Paul did, things necessary and essential from things accidental and trivial. Pig-headed obstinacy, to use a very homely but a very expressive phrase, which indeed is often only disguised pride, is a great enemy to the peace and harmony of societies and churches. St. Paul displayed great boldness here. He was not afraid of being misrepresented, that ghost which frightens so many a popularity hunter from the course which is true and right. How easily his fierce opponents, the men who had gone to Corinth and Galatia to oppose him, might misrepresent his action in joining himself to the Nazarites! They were the extreme men of the Jerusalem Church. They were the men for whom the decisions of the Apostolic Council had no weight, and who held still as of old that unless a man be circumcised he could not be saved. How easily, I say, these men could despatch their emissaries, who should proclaim that their opponent Paul had conceded all their demands and was himself observing the law at Jerusalem. St. Paul was not afraid of this misrepresentation, but boldly took the course which seemed to him right and true, and charitable, despite the malicious tongues of his adversaries. The Apostle of the Gentiles left us an example which many still require.

How many a man is kept from adopting a course that is charitable and tends to peace and edification, solely because he is afraid of what opponents may say, or how they may twist and misrepresent his action. St. Paul was possessed with none of this moral cowardice which specially flourishes among so-called party-leaders, men who, instead of leading, are always led and governed by the opinions of their followers.<sup>1</sup> St. Paul simply determined in his conscience what was right, and then fearlessly acted out his determination.

Some persons perhaps would argue that the result of his action showed that he was wrong and had unworthily compromised the cause of Christian freedom. They think that had he not consented to appear as a Nazarite in the Temple no riot would have occurred, his arrest would have been avoided, and the course of history might have been very different. But here we would join issue on the spot. The results of his action vindicated his Christian wisdom. The great body of the Jerusalem Church were convinced of his sincerity and realised his position. He maintained his

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<sup>1</sup> We see enough of this in politics. We see it in the Church as well. Writing as one with nearly a quarter of a century's experience of a disestablished, and therefore of a popularly governed Church, I have seen a great deal of this tendency in ecclesiastical matters. Prominent and ambitious men are ever apt to fall into the snare here noted. The tendency of popular assemblies is ever to develop a class of men who will have but little backbone, and will be always ready to rectify their convictions to suit their constituencies. "Show thou me the way I should walk in," but in a very different sense from the Psalmist's, is the unuttered prayer of their lives, addressed to the popular audiences of whose opinions they are the mere expressions, not the guides. For such men this typical history has many a reproof in St. Paul's brave conduct upon this and every other occasion. He was never afraid of a little temporary misrepresentation, and therefore he proved a real guide to the Church of his own and of every age.

influence over them, which had been seriously imperilled previously, and thus helped on the course of development which had been going on. Ten years before the advocates of Gentile freedom were but a small body. Now the vast majority of the local church at Jerusalem held fast to this idea, while still clinging fast to the obligation laid upon the Jews to observe the law. St. Paul did his best to maintain his friendship and alliance with the Jerusalem Church. To put himself right with them he travelled up to Jerusalem, when fresh fields and splendid prospects were opening up for him in the West. For this purpose he submitted to several days restraint and attendance in the Temple, and the results vindicated his determination. The Jerusalem Church continued the same course of orderly development, and when, ten years later, Jerusalem was threatened with destruction, the Christian congregations alone rose above the narrow bigoted patriotism which bound the Jews to the Holy City. The Christians alone realised that the day of the Mosaic Law was at length passed, and, retiring to the neighbouring city of Pella, escaped the destruction which awaited the fanatical adherents of the Law and the Temple.<sup>1</sup>

Another answer, too, may be made to this objection. It was not his action in the matter of the Nazarites that brought about the riot and the arrest and his consequent imprisonment. It was the hostility of the Jews of Asia; and they would have assailed him whenever and wherever they met him. Studying the matter too even in view of results, we should draw the opposite conclusion. God Himself approved his course. A Divine

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<sup>1</sup> See Eusebius, *H. E.*, iii. 5, and the notes of Valesius on that passage.

vision was vouchsafed to him in the guard-room of Antonia, after he had twice experienced Jewish violence, and bestowed upon him the approbation of Heaven: "The night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer; for as thou hast testified concerning Me at Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." His courageous and at the same time charitable action was vindicated by its results on the Jerusalem Church, by the sanction of Christ Himself, and lastly, by its blessed results upon the development of the Church at large in leading St. Paul to Rome, in giving him a wider and more influential sphere for his efforts, and in affording him leisure to write epistles like those to Ephesus, Philippi, and Colossæ, which have been so instructive and useful for the Church of all ages.

Another point which has exercised men's minds is found in St. Paul's attitude and words when brought before the Sanhedrin on the day after his arrest. The story is told in the opening verses of the twenty-third chapter. Let us quote them, as they vividly present the difficulty: "And Paul, looking stedfastly on the council, said, Brethren, I have lived before God in all good conscience until this day. And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth. Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: and sittest thou to judge me according to the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law? And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest? And Paul said, I wist not, brethren, that he was high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of a ruler of thy people."

Two difficulties here present themselves. (a) There is St. Paul's language, which certainly seems wanting

in Christian meekness, and not exactly modelled after the example of Christ, who, when He was reviled, reviled not again, and laid down in His Sermon on the Mount a law of suffering to which St. Paul does not here conform. But this is only a difficulty for those who have formed a superhuman estimate of St. Paul against which we have several times protested, and against which this very book of the Acts seems to take special care to warn its readers. If people will make the Apostle as sinless and as perfect as our Lord, they will of course be surprised at his language on this occasion. But if they regard him in the light in which St. Luke portrays him, as a man of like passions and infirmities with themselves, then they will feel no difficulty in the fact that St. Paul's natural temper was roused at the brutal and illegal command to smite a helpless prisoner on the mouth because he had made a statement which a member of the court did not relish. This passage seems to me not a difficulty, but a divinely guided passage witnessing to the inspiring influence of the Holy Ghost, and inserted to chasten our wandering fancy which would exalt the Apostle to a position equal to that which rightly belongs to his Divine Master alone.

(b) Then there is a second difficulty. Some have thought that St. Paul told a lie in this passage, and that, when defending himself from the charge of unscriptural insolence to the high priest, he merely pretended ignorance of his person, saying, "I wist not, brethren, that he was high priest." The older commentators devised various explanations of this passage. Dr. John Lightfoot, in his *Horæ Hebraicæ*, treating of this verse, sums them all up as follows. Either St. Paul means that he did not recognise Ananias as high priest



because he did not lawfully occupy the office, or else because that Christ was now the only high priest; or else because there had been so many and so frequent changes that as a matter of fact he did not know who was the actual high priest. None of these is a satisfactory explanation. Mr. Lewin offers what strikes me as the most natural explanation, considering all the circumstances. Ananias was appointed high priest about 47, continued in office till 59, and was killed in the beginning of the great Jewish war. He was a thoroughly historical character, and his high priesthood is guaranteed for us by the testimony of Josephus, who tells us of his varied fortunes and of his tragic death. But St. Paul never probably once saw him, as he was absent from Jerusalem, except for one brief visit all the time while he enjoyed supreme office.

Now the Sanhedrin consisted of seventy-one judges, they sat in a large hall with a crowd of scribes and pupils in front of them, and the high priest, as we have already pointed out (vol. i., p. 181), was not necessarily president or chairman. St. Paul was very short-sighted, and the ophthalmia under which he continually suffered was probably much intensified by the violent treatment he had experienced the day before. Could anything be more natural than that a short-sighted man should not recognise in such a crowd the particular person who had uttered this very brief, but very tyrannical command, "Smite him on the mouth"? Surely an impartial review of St. Paul's life shows him ever to have been at least a man of striking courage, and therefore one who would never have descended to cloke his own hasty words with even the shadow of an untruth! <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> There is no necessity to adopt forced and unnatural explanations



Again, the readiness and quickness of St. Paul in seizing upon every opportunity of escape have important teaching for us. Upon four different occasions at this crisis he displayed this characteristic. Let us note them for our guidance. When he was rescued by the chief captain and was carried into the castle, the captain ordered him to be examined by scourging to elicit the true cause of the riot, St. Paul then availed himself of his privilege as a Roman citizen to escape that torture. When he stood before the council he perceived the old division between the Pharisees and the Sadducees to be still in existence, which he had known long ago when he was himself connected with it. He skilfully availed himself of that circumstance to raise dissension among his opponents. He grasped the essential principle which lay at the basis of his teaching, and that was the doctrine of the Resurrection and the assertion of the reality of the spiritual world. Without that doctrine Christianity and Christian teaching was utterly meaningless, and in that doctrine Pharisees and Christians were united. Dropping the line of defence he was about to offer, which probably would have proceeded to show how true to conscience and to Divine light had been his course of life, he cried out, "I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees : touching the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question." Grotius, an old and learned commentator, dealing with ch. xxiii. 6, has well summed up the principles

when an easy one lies ready to our hand, and we all have daily experience how hard it is for even a keen-sighted man to distinguish among a crowd the person who utters a brief exclamation ; a fact which the debates in the House of Commons often illustrate. I can myself quite appreciate St. Paul's difficulty. I am extremely short-sighted, and am never able to discern—say in a meeting of one of our synods—who it is that interrupts or contradicts me.

on which St. Paul acted on this occasion in the following words: "St. Paul was not lacking in human prudence, making use of which for the service of the gospel, he intermingled the wisdom of the serpent with the gentleness of the dove, and thus utilised the dissensions of his enemies." Yet once more we see the same tact in operation. After the meeting of the Sanhedrin and his rescue from out of its very midst, a plot was formed to assassinate him, of which he was informed by his nephew. Then again St. Paul did not let things slide, trusting in the Divine care alone. He knew right well that God demanded of men of faith that they should be fellow-workers with God and lend Him their co-operation. He knew too the horror which the Roman authorities had of riot and of all illegal measures; he despatched his nephew therefore to the chief captain, and by his readiness of resource saved himself from imminent danger. Lastly, we find the same characteristic trait coming out at Cæsarea. His experience of Roman rule taught him the anxiety of new governors to please the people among whom they came. He knew that Festus would be anxious to gratify the Jewish authorities in any way he possibly could. They were very desirous to have the Apostle transferred from Cæsarea to Jerusalem, sure that in some way or another they could there dispose of him. Knowing therefore the dangerous position in which he stood, St. Paul's readiness and tact again came to his help. He knew Roman law thoroughly well. He knew that as a Roman citizen he had one resource left by which in one brief sentence he could transfer himself out of the jurisdiction of Sanhedrin and Procurator alike, and of this he availed himself at the critical moment, pronouncing the magic words *Cæsarem Appello*

(" I appeal unto Cæsar "). St Paul left in all these cases a healthy example which the Church urgently required in subsequent years. He had no morbid craving after suffering or death. No man ever lived in a closer communion with his God, or in a more steadfast readiness to depart and be with Christ. But he knew that it was his duty to remain at his post till the Captain of his salvation gave a clear note of withdrawal, and that clear note was only given when every avenue of escape was cut off. St. Paul therefore used his knowledge and his tact in order to ascertain the Master's will and discover whether it was His wish that His faithful servant should depart or tarry yet awhile for the discharge of his earthly duties. I have said that this was an example necessary for the Church in subsequent ages. The question of flight in persecution became a very practical one as soon as the Roman Empire assumed an attitude definitely hostile to the Church. The more extreme and fanatical party not only refused to take any measures to secure their safety or escape death, but rather rushed headlong upon it, and upbraided those as traitors and renegades who tried in any way to avoid suffering.<sup>1</sup> From the earliest times, from the days of Ignatius of Antioch himself, we see this morbid tendency displaying itself; while the Church in the person of several of its greatest leaders—men like Polycarp

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<sup>1</sup> Any reader who wishes to see how this question was discussed about the year 200 A.D. should turn to Tertullian's treatise *De Fuga in Persecutione*, c. 6., in his works translated in Clark's Ante-Nicene Library, vol. i., p. 364, where Tertullian admits that the apostles fled in time of persecution, but argues that the permission to do so was merely temporary and personal to the apostles. The study of Church history is specially useful in showing us how exactly the same tendencies emerge in ancient and modern schisms and sects. Tertullian would have been a Quietist had he lived in the seventeenth century; see note 2, p. 446.

and Cyprian, who themselves retired from impending danger till the Roman authorities discovered them—showed that St. Paul's wiser teaching and example were not thrown away.<sup>1</sup> Quietism was a view which two centuries ago made a great stir both in England and France, and seems embodied to some extent in certain modern forms of thought. It taught that believers should lie quite passive in God's hands and make no effort for themselves. Quietism would never have found a follower in the vigorous mind of St. Paul, who proved himself through all those trials and vicissitudes of more than two years ever ready with some new device wherewith to meet the hatred of his foes.<sup>2</sup>

III. We notice lastly in the narrative of St. Paul's imprisonment his interviews with and his testimony before the members of the house of Herod. St. Peter had experience of the father of Herod Agrippa, and now St. Paul comes into contact with the children, Agrippa, Drusilla and Bernice. And thus it came about. Felix the procurator, as we have already explained, was a very bad man, and had enticed Drusilla from her husband.

<sup>1</sup> St. Ignatius of Antioch was very desirous of martyrdom. St. Polycarp fifty years avoided it till he was arrested. St. Clement of Alexandria, in his *Stromata*, iv. 16, 17, condemns the suicidal passion for martyrdom. St. Cyprian, enthusiastic as he was, retired like Polycarp till escape was impossible. These holy men all acted like St. Paul. They waited till God had intimated His will by shutting up all way of escape. The story of Polycarp has an interesting warning against presumptuous rushing upon trials. Quintus, one of St. Polycarp's flock, gave himself up to death. His courage failed him at the last, and he became an apostate: see on this subject Lightfoot's *Ignatius and Polycarp*, vol. i., pp. 38, 393, 603.

<sup>2</sup> Quietism, Jansenism, and Quakerism were all manifestations of the same spirit, and arose about the same time. Molinos was the founder of Quietism in Spain. A concise account of the movement will be found in Schaff's *Theological Encyclopedia* in connexion with the names of Molinos and Guyon.

He doubtless told her of the Jewish prisoner who lay a captive in the city where she was living. The Herods were a clever race, and they knew all about Jewish hopes and Messianic expectations, and they ever seem to have been haunted by a certain curiosity concerning the new sect of the Nazarenes. One Herod desired for a long time to see Jesus Christ, and was delighted when Pilate gratified his longing. Drusilla, doubtless, was equally curious, and easily persuaded her husband to gratify her desire. We therefore read in ch. xxiv. 24, "But after certain days, Felix came with Drusilla, his wife, which was a Jewess, and sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ Jesus."

Neither of them calculated on the kind of man they had to do with. St. Paul knew all the circumstances of the case. He adapted his speech thereto. He made a powerful appeal to the conscience of the guilty pair. He reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and the judgment to come, and beneath his weighty words Felix trembled. His convictions were roused. He experienced a transient season of penitence, such as touched another guilty member of the Herodian house who feared John and did many things gladly to win his approval. But habits of sin had grasped Felix too firmly. He temporised with his conscience. He put off the day of salvation when it was dawning on him, and his words, "Go thy way for this time, and when I have a convenient season I will call thee unto me," became the typical language of all those souls for whom procrastination, want of decision, trifling with spiritual feelings, have been the omens and the causes of eternal ruin.

But Felix and Drusilla were not the only members

of the Herodian house with whom Paul came in contact. Felix and Drusilla left Palestine when two years of St. Paul's imprisonment had elapsed. Festus, another procurator, followed, and began his course, as all the Roman rulers of Palestine began theirs. The Jews, when Felix visited Jerusalem, besought him to deliver the prisoner lying bound at Cæsarea to the judgment of their Sanhedrin. Festus, all powerful as a Roman governor usually was, dared not treat a Roman citizen thus without his own consent, and when that consent was asked Paul at once refused, knowing right well the intentions of the Jews, and appealed unto Cæsar. A Roman governor, however, would not send a prisoner to the judgment of the Emperor without stating the crime imputed to him. Just at that moment Herod Agrippa, king of Chalcis and of the district of Ituræa, together with his sister Bernice, appeared on the scene. He was a Jew, and was well acquainted therefore with the accusations brought against the Apostle, and could inform the procurator what report he should send to the Emperor. Festus therefore brought Paul before them, and gave him another opportunity of expounding the faith of Jesus Christ and the law of love and purity which that faith involved to a family who ever treated that law with profound contempt. St. Paul availed himself of that opportunity. He addressed his whole discourse to the king, and that discourse was typical of those he addressed to Jewish audiences. It was like the sermon delivered to the Jews in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia in one important aspect. Both discourses gathered round the resurrection of Jesus Christ as their central idea. St. Paul began his address before Agrippa with that doctrine, and he ended with the same. The hope of Israel, towards

which their continuous worship tended, was the resurrection of the dead. That was St. Paul's opening idea. The same note lay beneath the narrative of his own conversion, and then he returned back to his original statement that the Risen Christ was the hope of Israel and of the world taught by Moses and proclaimed by prophets. But it was all in vain as regards Agrippa and Bernice. The Herods were magnificent, clever, beautiful. But they were of the earth, earthy. Agrippa said indeed to Paul, "With but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian." But it was not souls like his for whom the gospel message was intended. The Herods knew nothing of the burden of sin or the keen longing of souls desirous of holiness and of God. They were satisfied with the present transient scene, and enjoyed it thoroughly. Agrippa's father when he lay a-dying at Cæsarea consoled himself with the reflection that though his career was prematurely cut short, yet at any rate he had lived a splendid life. And such as the parent had been, such were the children. King Agrippa and his sister Bernice were true types of the stony-ground hearers, with whom "the care of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word." And they choked the word so effectually in his case, even when taught by St. Paul, that the only result upon Agrippa, as St. Luke reports it, was this: "Agrippa said unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Cæsar."



## CHAPTER. XVIII.

### *IN PERILS ON THE SEA.*

“And when it was determined that we should sail for Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners to a centurion named Julius, of the Augustan band. And embarking in a ship of Adramyttium, which was about to sail unto the places on the coast of Asia, we put to sea, Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us. And the next day we touched at Sidon : and Julius treated Paul kindly, and gave him leave to go unto his friends and refresh himself.”—ACTS xxvii. 1-3.

“And when we entered into Rome, Paul was suffered to abide by himself with the soldier that guarded him.”—ACTS xxviii. 16.

THIS chapter terminates our survey of the Acts of the Apostles, and leads us at the same time to contemplate the Apostle of the Gentiles in a new light as a traveller and as a prisoner, in both which aspects he has much to teach us. When St. Paul was despatched to the judgment-seat of Cæsar from the port of Cæsarea, he had arrived at the middle of his long captivity. Broadly speaking he was five years a prisoner from the day of his arrest at Jerusalem till his release by the decision of Nero. He was a prisoner for more than two years when Festus sent him to Rome, and then at Rome he spent two more years in captivity, while his voyage occupied fully six months. Let us now first of all look at that captivity, and strive to discover those purposes of good therein which God hides amidst all his dispensations and chastisements.

We do not always realise what a length of time was consumed in the imprisonments of St. Paul. He must have spent from the middle of 58 to the beginning of 63 as a prisoner cut off from many of those various activities in which he had previously laboured so profitably for God's cause. That must have seemed to himself and to many others a terrible loss to the gospel; and yet now, as we look back from our vantage-point, we can see many reasons why the guidance of his heavenly Father may have led directly to this imprisonment, which proved exceedingly useful for himself and his own soul's health, for the past guidance and for the perpetual edification of the Church of Christ. There is a text in Ephesians iv. 1 which throws some light on this incident. In that Epistle, written when St. Paul was a captive at Rome, he describes himself thus, "I therefore the prisoner *in* the Lord," or "the prisoner *of* the Lord," as the Authorised Version puts it. These words occur as the beginning of the Epistle for the Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity. Now there is often a marvellous amount of spiritual wisdom and instruction to be gained from a comparison between the epistles and gospels and the collects for each Sunday. All my readers may not agree in the whole theological system which underlies the Prayer Book, but every one will acknowledge that its services and their construction are the result of rich and varied spiritual experiences extending over a period of more than a thousand years. The mere contrast of an epistle and of a collect will often suggest thoughts deep and searching. So it is with this text, "I therefore the prisoner in the Lord." It is preceded by the brief pithy prayer, "Lord, we pray Thee that Thy grace may always prevent and follow us, and make us continually to be given to all

good works, through Jesus Christ our Lord." The words of St. Paul to the Ephesians speaking of himself as the prisoner of God and in God suggested immediately the idea of God's grace surrounding, shaping, constraining to His service every external circumstance; and thus led to the formation of the collect which in fact prays that we may realise ourselves as so completely God's as, like the Apostle, continually to be given to all good works. St. Paul realised himself as so prevented, using that word in its ancient sense, preceded and followed by God's grace, guarded before and behind by it, that he looked beyond the things seen, and discarding all secondary agents and all lower instruments, he viewed his imprisonment as God's own immediate work.

I. Let us then see in what way we may regard St. Paul's imprisonment as an arrangement and outcome of Divine love. Take, for instance, St. Paul in his own personal life. This period of imprisonment, of enforced rest and retirement, may have been absolutely necessary for him. St. Paul had spent many a long and busy year building up the spiritual life of others, founding churches, teaching converts, preaching, debating, struggling, suffering. His life had been one of intense spiritual, intellectual, bodily activity on behalf of others. But no one can be engaged in intense activity without wasting some of the spiritual life and force necessary for himself. Religious work, the most direct spiritual activity, visiting the sick, or preaching the gospel, or celebrating the sacraments, make a tremendous call upon our devotional powers and directly tend to lower our spiritual vitality, unless we seek abundant and frequent renewal thereof at the source of all spiritual vitality and life. Now God by this long imprisonment

took St. Paul aside once again, as He had taken him aside twenty years before, amid the rocks of Sinai. God laid hold of him in his career of external business, as He laid hold of Moses in the court of Pharaoh, leading him into the wilderness of Midian for forty long years. God made St. Paul His prisoner that, having laboured for others, and having tended diligently their spiritual vineyard, he might now watch over and tend his own for a time. And the wondrous manner in which he profited by his imprisonment is manifest from this very Epistle to the Ephesians, in which he describes himself as God's prisoner—not, be it observed, the prisoner of the Jews, or of the Romans, or of Cæsar, but as the prisoner of God—dealing in the profoundest manner, as that Epistle does, with the greatest mysteries of the Christian faith. St. Paul had an opportunity during those four or five years, such as he never had before, of realising, digesting, and assimilating in all their fulness the doctrines he had so long proclaimed to others, and was thus enabled out of the depth of his own personal experience to preach what he felt and knew to be true, the only kind of teaching which will ever be worth anything.

Again, St. Paul designates himself the prisoner of the Lord because of the benefits his imprisonment conferred upon the Church of Christ in various ways. Take his imprisonment at Cæsarea alone. We are not expressly told anything about his labours during that time. But knowing St. Paul's intense energy we may be sure that the whole local Christian community established in that important centre whence the gospel could diffuse itself as far as the extremest west on the one side and the extremest east on the other, was permeated by his teaching and vitalised by his example.

He was allowed great freedom, as the Acts declares. Felix "gave orders to the centurion that he should be kept in charge, and should have indulgence; and not to forbid any of his friends to minister unto him." If we take the various centurions to whom he was intrusted, we may be sure that St. Paul must have omitted no opportunity of leading them to Christ. St. Paul seems to have known how to make his way to the hearts of Roman soldiers, as his subsequent treatment by Julius the centurion shows, and that permission of the governor would be liberally interpreted when deputies from distant churches sought his presence. Messengers from the various missions he had founded must have had recourse to Cæsarea during those two years spent there, and thence too was doubtless despatched many a missive of advice and exhortation. At Cæsarea, too, may then have been written the Gospel of St. Luke. Lewin (vol. i., p. 221), indeed, places its composition at Philippi, where St. Luke laboured for several years prior to St. Paul's visit in 57 A.D. after leaving Ephesus; and he gives as his reason for this conclusion that St. Paul called St. Luke in 2 Cor. viii. 18, written about that time, "the brother whose praise is in the Gospel," referring to his Gospel then lately published.<sup>1</sup> I think the sugges-

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<sup>1</sup> This involves, however, the supposition that St. Luke's narrative had then obtained its more modern name of "the Gospel," which is in my opinion an anachronism. In the earliest writings which refer to apostolic narratives they are simply called the writings or memoirs or commentaries of the apostles, as in Aristides, c. xvi., and Justin Martyr, *Apol.*, i. 67. In Aristides there is one passage in ch. ii. where the word gospel is used, but not in the sense of a special title for a book: "This is taught from that Gospel which a little while ago was spoken among them as being preached; wherein if ye also will read, ye will comprehend the power that is upon it." Irenæus, III. xi. 7, 8,

tion much more likely that St. Luke took advantage of this pause in St. Paul's activity to write his Gospel at Cæsarea when he had not merely the assistance of the Apostle himself, but of Philip the deacon, and was within easy reach of St. James and the Jerusalem Church. St. Luke's Gospel bears evident traces of St. Paul's ideas and doctrine, was declared by Irenæus (*Hær.*, iii. 1) to have been composed under his direction,<sup>1</sup> and may with much probability be regarded as one of the blessed results flowing forth from St. Paul's detention as Christ's prisoner given by Him in charge to the Roman governor.

The Apostle's Roman imprisonment again was most profitable to the Church of the imperial capital. The Church of Rome had been founded by the efforts of individuals. Private Christians did the work, not apostles or eminent evangelists. St. Paul came to it first of all as a prisoner, and found it a flourishing church. And yet he benefited and blessed it greatly. He could not, indeed, preach to crowded audiences in synagogues or porticoes as he had done elsewhere. But he blessed the Church of Rome most chiefly by his individual efforts. This man came to him into his own hired house, and that man followed him attracted by the magnetic influence he seemed to bear about. The soldiers appointed as his keepers were told the story of the Cross and the glad tidings of the

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is the earliest I can now recall who uses the word gospel in this technical sense. He speaks there of the Gospel of St. Matthew, etc. But this was in the last quarter of the second century. In the year 57, when Second Corinthians was written, the word gospel was applied to the whole body of revealed truth held by the Church, and not to a book.

<sup>1</sup> Iren., iii. 1: "Luke, also the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the gospel preached by him." With respect to the relation between St. Paul and St. Luke, see also Iren., iii., xiv., xv.

resurrection life, and these individual efforts were fruitful in vast results, so that even into the household and palace of the Cæsars did this patient, quiet, evangelistic work extend its influence.<sup>1</sup> Nowhere else, in fact, not even in Corinth, where St. Paul spent two whole years openly teaching without any serious interruption; not even in Ephesus, where he laboured so long that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word; nowhere else, was the Apostle's ministry so effective as here in Rome, where the prisoner of the Lord was confined to individual effort and completely laid aside from more public and enlarged activity. It was with St. Paul as it is with God's messengers still. It is not eloquent or excited public efforts, or platform addresses, or public debates, or clever books that are most fruitful in spiritual results. Nay, it is often the quiet individual efforts of private Christians, the testimony of a patient sufferer perhaps, the witness all-powerful with men, of a life transformed through and through by Christian principle, and lived in the perpetual sunshine of God's reconciled countenance. These are the testimonies that speak most effectually for God, most directly to souls.

Lastly, St. Paul's imprisonment blessed the Church of every age, and through it blessed mankind at large

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<sup>1</sup> The subject of Christianity and the household of Cæsarea would form an interesting subject of inquiry did only space permit. I have, however, the less hesitation in passing it over because it has been exhaustively discussed by Bishop Lightfoot in the following places, to which I must refer my readers: *Philippians*, Introduction pp. 1-28, and in dissertations on, pp. 97-102 and 169-76. This is also the subject of an elaborate monograph by Professor Harnack in the *Princeton Review* for July 1878, entitled "Christians and Rome," with which should be compared Schürer's *Geschichte des Jüdischen Volkes*, ii. 506-512, and a treatise published by him *Die Gemeindeverfassung der Juden in Rom.*, Leipzig 1879.



far more than his liberty and his external activity could have done in one other direction. Is it not a contradiction in terms to say that the imprisonment of this courageous leader, this eloquent preacher, this keen, subtle debater should have been more profitable to the Church than the exercise of his external freedom and liberty, when all these dormant powers would have found ample scope for their complete manifestation? And yet if Christ had not laid His arresting hand upon the active, external labour in which St. Paul had been absorbed, if Christ had not cast the busy Apostle into the Roman prison-house, the Church of all future time would have been deprived of those masterly expositions of Christian truth which she now enjoys in the various Epistles of the Captivity, and specially in those addressed to the churches of Ephesus, Philippi, and Colossæ. We have now noted some of the blessings resulting from St. Paul's five years' captivity, and indicated a line of thought which may be applied to the whole narrative contained in the two chapters with which we are dealing. St. Paul was a captive, and that captivity gave him access at Cæsarea to various classes of society, to the soldiers, and to all that immense crowd of officials connected with the seat of government, quæstors, tribunes, assessors, apparitors, scribes, advocates. His captivity then led him on board ship, and brought him into contact with the sailors and with a number of passengers drawn from diverse lands. A storm came on, and then the Apostle's self-possession, his calm Christian courage, when every one else was panic-stricken, gave him influence over the motley crowd. The waves flung the ship of Alexandria in which he was travelling upon Malta, and his stay there during the tempestuous

winter months became the basis of the conversion of its inhabitants. Everywhere in St. Paul's life and course at this season we can trace the outcome of Divine love, the power of Divine providence shaping God's servant for His own purposes, restraining man's wrath when it waxed too fierce, and causing the remainder of that wrath to praise Him by its blessed results.

II. Let us now gather up into a brief narrative the story contained in these two chapters, so that we may gain a bird's eye view over the whole. Festus entered upon his provincial rule about June A.D. 60. According to Roman law the outgoing governor, of whatever kind he was, had to await his successor's arrival and hand over the reins of government—a very natural and proper rule which all civilised governments observe. We have no idea how vast the apparatus of provincial, or, as we should say, colonial government among the Romans was, and how minute their regulations were, till we take up one of those helps which German scholars have furnished towards the knowledge of antiquity, as, for instance, Mommsen's *Roman Provinces*, which can be read in English, or Marquardt's *Römische Staatsverwaltung*, vol. i., which can be studied either in German or French.<sup>1</sup> The very city where first the new governor was to appear and the method of fulfilling his duties as the Judge of Assize were minutely laid down and duly followed a well-established routine. We find these things indicated in the case of Festus. He arrived at

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<sup>1</sup> The governors brought with them regular bodies of assessors, who assisted them like a privy council. There is a reference to this council in Acts xxv. 12 and xxvi. 30. These councils served as training schools in law and statesmanship for the young Roman nobility. See Marquardt, *l.c.*, p. 391.

Cæsarea. He waited three days till his predecessor had left for Rome, and then he ascended to Jerusalem to make the acquaintance of that very troublesome and very influential city. Felix then returned to Cæsarea after ten days spent in gaining an intimate knowledge of the various points of a city which often before had been the centre of rebellion, and where he might at any moment be called upon to act with sternness and decision. He at once heard St. Paul's cause as the Jews had demanded, brought him a second time before Agrippa, and then in virtue of his appeal to Cæsar despatched him to Rome in care of a centurion and a small band of soldiers, a large guard not being necessary, as the prisoners were not ordinary criminals, but for the most part men of some position, Roman citizens, doubtless, who had, like the Apostle, appealed unto the judgment of Cæsar.<sup>1</sup> St. Paul embarked, accompanied by Luke and Aristarchus, as the ship, being an ordinary trading vessel, contained not only prisoners, but also passengers as well. We do not intend to enter upon the details of St. Paul's voyage, because that lies beyond our range, and also because it has been thoroughly done in the various *Lives* of the Apostle, and above all in the exhaustive work of Mr. James Smith of Jordanhills. He has devoted a volume to this one topic, has explored every source of knowledge, has entered into discussions touching the build and rigging of ancient ships and the direction of Mediterranean winds, has minutely investigated the scenery and history of such places as Malta where

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<sup>1</sup> Roman citizens had the right of appeal no matter where they were born or of what race they came or how humble their lot in life. Mere provincials devoid of citizenship, no matter how distinguished their position, had not that right.

the Apostle was wrecked, and has illustrated the whole with beautiful plates and carefully drawn maps. That work has gone through four editions at least, and deserves a place in every man's library who wishes to understand the life and labours of St. Paul or study the Acts of the Apostles. We may, however, without trenching on Mr. Smith's field, indicate the outline of the route followed by the holy travellers. They embarked at Cæsarea under the care of a centurion of the Augustan cohort, or regiment, as we should say, whose name was Julius.<sup>1</sup> They took their passage at first in a ship of Adramyttium, which was probably sailing from Cæsarea to lie up for the winter. Adramyttium was a seaport situated up in the north-west of Asia Minor near Troas, and the Sea of Marmora, or, to put it in modern language, near Constantinople. The ship was, in fact, about to travel over exactly the same ground as St. Paul himself had traversed more than two years before when he proceeded from Troas to Jerusalem. Surely, some one may say, this was not the direct route to Rome! But then we must throw ourselves back into the circumstances of the period. There was then no regular transport service. People, even the most exalted, had to avail themselves of whatever means of communication chance offered. Cicero, when chief governor of Asia, had, as we have already noted, to travel part of the way from Rome in undecked vessels, while ten years later than St. Paul's voyage the Emperor Vespasian himself, the greatest potentate

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<sup>1</sup> Julius is one of those unknown characters of Scripture about whom we would desire more information. He is described as a centurion of the Augustan band, which was the imperial guard, and was always stationed at Rome. Julius may possibly have been an officer of this guard sent out with Festus and now returning back to his duties.

in the world, had no trireme or warship waiting upon him, but when he wished to proceed from Palestine to Rome at the time of the great siege of Jerusalem was obliged to take a passage in an ordinary merchant vessel or corn ship.<sup>1</sup> It is no wonder, then, that the prisoners were put on board a coasting vessel of Asia, the centurion knowing right well that in sailing along by the various ports which studded the shore of that province they would find some other vessel into which they could be transferred. And this expectation was realised. The centurion and his prisoners sailed first of all to Sidon, where St. Paul found a Christian Church. This circumstance illustrates again the quiet and steady growth of the gospel kingdom, and also gave Julius an opportunity of exhibiting his kindly feelings towards the Apostle by permitting him to go and visit the brethren. In fact, we would conclude from this circumstance that St. Paul had already begun to establish an influence over the mind of Julius which must have culminated in his conversion. Here, at Sidon, he permits him to visit his Christian friends; a short time after his regard for Paul leads him to restrain his troops from executing the merciless purposes their Roman discipline had taught them and slaying all the prisoners lest they should escape; and yet once again when the prisoners land on Italian soil and stand beside the charming scenery of the Bay of Naples he permits the Apostle to spend a week with the Christians of Puteoli. After this brief visit to the Sidonian Church, the vessel bearing the Apostle pursues its way by Cyprus to the port of Myra at the south-western corner of Asia Minor, a neigh-

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<sup>1</sup> See Josephus, *Wars*, VII. ii. 1. It was exactly the same with Titus, Vespasian's son, after the war ended. He travelled from Alexandria to Italy in a trading vessel. Suet., *Tit.*, c. 5.

bourhood which St. Paul knew right well and had often visited. It was there at Patara close at hand that he had embarked on board the vessel which carried him two years before to Palestine, and it was there too at Perga of Pamphylia that he had first landed on the shores of the Asiatic province seeking to gather its teeming millions into the fold of Jesus Christ. Here at Myra the centurion realised his expectations, and finding an Alexandrian transport sailing to Italy he put the prisoners on board. From Myra they seem to have sailed at once, and from the day they left it their misfortunes began. The wind was contrary, blowing from the west, and to make any way they had to sail to the island Cnidus, which lay north-west of Myra. After a time, when the wind became favourable, they sailed south-west till they reached the island of Crete, which lay half-way between Greece and Asia Minor. They then proceeded along the southern coast of this island till they were struck by a sudden wind coming from the north-east, which drove them first to the neighbouring island of Clauda, and then, after a fortnight's drifting through a tempestuous sea, hurled the ship upon the shores of Malta. The wreck took place towards the close of October or early in November, and the whole party were obliged to remain in Malta till the spring season permitted the opening of navigation. During his stay in Malta St. Paul performed several miracles. With his intensely practical and helpful nature the Apostle flung himself into the work of common life, as soon as the shipwrecked party had got safe to land. He always did so. He never despised, like some religious fanatics, the duties of this world. On board the ship he had been the most useful adviser to the whole party. He had exhorted the captain of the ship not to leave a good



haven; he had stirred up the soldiers to prevent the sailors' escape; he had urged them all alike, crew and passengers and soldiers, to take food, foreseeing the terrible struggle they would have to make when the ship broke up. He was the most practical adviser his companions could possibly have had, and he was their wisest and most religious adviser too. His words on board ship teem with lessons for ourselves, as well as for his fellow-passengers. He trusted in God, and received special revelations from heaven, but he did not therefore neglect every necessary human precaution. The will of God was revealed to him that he had been given all the souls that sailed with him, and the angel of God cheered and comforted him in that storm-driven vessel in Adria, as often before when howling mobs thirsted like evening wolves for his blood. But the knowledge of God's purposes did not cause his exertions to relax. He knew that God's promises are conditional upon man's exertions, and therefore he urged his companions to be fellow-workers with God in the matter of their own salvation from impending death. And as it was on board the ship, so was it on the shore. The rain was descending in torrents, and the drenched passengers were shivering in the cold. St. Paul shows the example, so contagious in a crowd, of a man who had his wits about him, knew what to do, and would do it. He gathered therefore a bundle of sticks, and helped to raise a larger fire in the house which had received him. A man is marvellously helpful among a cowering and panic-stricken crowd which has just escaped death who will rouse them to some practical efforts for themselves, and will lead the way as the Apostle did on this occasion. And his action brought its own reward. He had gained influence



over the passengers, soldiers, and crew by his practical helpfulness. He was now to gain influence over the barbarian islanders in exactly the same way. A viper issued from the fire and fastened on his hand. The natives expected to see him fall down dead ; but after looking awhile and perceiving no change, they concluded him to be a god who had come to visit them. This report soon spread. The chief man therefore of the island sought out St. Paul and entertained him. His father was sick of dysentery and the Apostle healed him, using prayer and the imposition of hands as the outward symbols and means of the cure, which spread his fame still farther and led to other miraculous cures. Three months thus passed away. No distinct missionary work is indeed recorded by St. Luke, but this is his usual custom in writing his narrative. He supposes that Theophilus, his friend and correspondent, will understand that the Apostle ever kept the great end of his life in view, never omitting to teach Christ and Him crucified to the perishing multitudes where his lot was cast. But St. Luke was not one of those who are always attempting to chronicle spiritual successes or to tabulate the number of souls led to Christ. He left that to another day and to a better and more infallible judge. In three months' time, when February's days grew longer and milder winds began to blow, the rescued travellers joined a corn ship of Alexandria which had wintered in the island, and all set forward towards Rome. They touched at Syracuse in Sicily, sailed thence to Rhegium, passing through the Straits of Messina, whence, a favourable south wind springing up, and the vessel running before it at the rate of seven knots an hour, the usual speed for ancient vessels under such circumstances, they arrived at

Puteoli, one hundred and eighty-two miles distant from Rhegium, in the course of some thirty hours. At Puteoli the sea voyage ended. It may at first seem strange to us with our modern notions that St. Paul was allowed to tarry at Puteoli with the local Christian Church for seven days. But then we must remember that St. Paul and the centurion did not live in the days of telegraphs and railway trains. There was doubtless a guard-room, barrack or prison in which the prisoners could be accommodated. The centurion and guard were weary after a long and dangerous journey, and they would be glad of a brief period of repose before they set out again towards the capital. This hypothesis alone would be quite sufficient to account for the indulgence granted to St. Paul, even supposing that his Christian teaching had made no impression on the centurion. The Church existing then at Puteoli is another instance of that quiet diffusion of the gospel which was going on all over the world without any noise or boasting. We have frequently called attention to this, as at Tyre, Ptolemais, Sidon, and here again we find a little company of saintly men and women gathered out of the world and living the ideal life of purity and faith beside the waters of the Bay of Naples. And yet it is quite natural that we should find them at Puteoli, because it was one of the great ports which received the corn ships of Alexandria and the merchantmen of Cæsarea and Antioch into her harbour, and in these ships many a Christian came bringing the seed of eternal life which he diligently sowed as he travelled along the journey of life. In fact, seeing that the Church of Rome had sprung up and flourished so abundantly, taking its origin not from any apostle's teaching, but simply from such sporadic effects, we

cannot wonder that Puteoli, which lay right on the road from the East to Rome, should also have gained a blessing.<sup>1</sup> A circumstance, however, has come to light within the last thirty years which does surprise us concerning this same neighbourhood, showing how extensively the gospel had permeated and honeycombed the country parts of Italy within the lifetime of the first apostles and disciples of Jesus Christ. Puteoli was a trading town, and Jews congregated in such places, and trade lends an element of seriousness to life which prepares a ground fitted for the good seed of the kingdom. But pleasure pure and unmitigated and a life devoted to its pursuit does not prepare such a soil. Puteoli was a trading city, but Pompeii was a pleasure-loving city thinking of nothing else, and where sin and iniquity consequently abounded. Yet Christianity had made its way into Pompeii in the lifetime of the apostles. How then do we know this? This is one of the results of modern archæological investigations and of epigraphical research, two great sources of new light upon early Christian history which have been only of late years duly appreciated. Pompeii, as every person of moderate education knows, was totally overthrown by the first great eruption of Mount Vesuvius in the year 79 A.D. It is a curious circumstance that contemporaneous authors make but the very slightest and most dubious references to that destruction, though one would

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<sup>1</sup> The accuracy of the Acts in representing Puteoli as the seat of an early church has been amply illustrated by modern investigations. Judaism was flourishing there from the earliest times. In the year 4 B.C. a colony of wealthy Jews was established at Puteoli (Josephus, *Wars*, II. vii. 1). An inscription has been found there commemorating a Jewish merchant of Ascalon named Herod (Schürer's *Jüdisch. Volk.*, I. 234).

have thought that the literature of the time would have rung with it; proving conclusively, if proof be needed, how little the argument from silence is worth, when the great writers who tell minutely about the intrigues and vices of emperors and statesmen of Rome do not bestow a single chapter upon the catastrophe which overtook two whole cities of Italy.<sup>1</sup> These cities remained for seventeen hundred years concealed from human sight or knowledge till revealed in the year 1755 by excavations systematically pursued. All the inscriptions found therein were undoubtedly and necessarily the work of persons who lived before A.D. 79 and then perished. Now at the time that Pompeii was destroyed there was a municipal election going on, and there were found on the walls numerous inscriptions formed with charcoal which were the substitutes then used for the literature and placards with which every election decorates our walls. Among these inscriptions of mere passing and transitory interest, there was one found which illustrates the point at which we have been labouring, for there, amid the election notices of 79 A.D., there appeared scribbled by some idle hand the brief words, "Igni gaude, Christiane" ("O Christian, rejoice in the fire"), proving clearly that Christians existed in Pompeii at that time, that they were known as Christians and not under any other appellation, that persecution and death had reached them, and that they possessed and displayed the same undaunted spirit as their great leader and teacher St. Paul, being enabled like him to rejoice even amid the sevenfold-heated fires, and in view of the resurrection life to lift the victorious pæan, "Thanks

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<sup>1</sup> This point is elaborated by Mr. Cazenove in an article on the Theban Legion contained in the *Dictionary of Christian Biography*, iii. 642.

be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." <sup>1</sup>

After the week's rest at Puteoli the centurion marched towards Rome. The Roman congregation had received notice of St. Paul's arrival by this time, and so the brethren despatched a deputation to meet an apostle with whom they were already well acquainted through the epistle he had sent them, as well as through the reports of various private Christians like Phœbe, the deaconness of Cenchreæ.<sup>2</sup> Two deputations from the Roman Church met him, one at Appii Forum, about thirty miles, another at the Three Taverns, about twenty miles, from the city. How wonderfully the heart of the Apostle must have been cheered by these kindly Christian attentions! We have before noticed in the cases of his Athenian sojourn and elsewhere how keenly alive he was to the offices of Christian friendship, how cheered and strengthened he was by Christian companionship. It was now the same once again as it was then. Support and sympathy were now more needed than ever before, for St. Paul was going up to Rome not knowing what should happen to him there or what should be his sentence at the hands of that emperor whose cruel character was now famous. And as it

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<sup>1</sup> This interesting inscription will be found in Mommsen, *Corpus of Latin Inscriptions*, vol. iv., No. 679. I described it in the *Contemporary Review* for January 1881, p. 97, in an article on Latin Christian Inscriptions. This inscription fully bears out Lord Lytton in the picture he gives of the introduction of Christianity into the neighbourhood of Vesuvius and Naples in his *Last Days of Pompeii*.

<sup>2</sup> Romans xvi. is a sufficient witness of the intimate knowledge of the Roman Church and its membership possessed by St. Paul. We may be sure that many mentioned in that catalogue written three or four years before found a place in the two deputations who went to meet St. Paul.

was at Athens and at Corinth and elsewhere, so was it here on the Appian Way and amid the depressing surroundings and unhealthy atmosphere of those Pomptine Marshes through which he was passing; "when Paul saw the brethren, he thanked God, and took courage." And now the whole company of primitive Christians proceeded together to Rome, allowed doubtless by the courtesy and thoughtfulness of Julius ample opportunities of private conversation. Having arrived at the imperial city, the centurion hastened to present himself and his charge to the captain of the prætorian guard, whose duty it was to receive prisoners consigned to the judgment of the Emperor. Upon the favourable report of Julius, St. Paul was not detained in custody, but suffered to dwell in his own hired lodgings, where he established a mission station whence he laboured most effectively both amongst Jews and Gentiles during two whole years. St. Paul began his work at Rome exactly as he did everywhere else. He called together the chief of the Jews, and through them strove to gain a lodgment in the synagogue. He began work at once. After three days, as soon as he had recovered from the fatigue of the rapid march along the Appian Way, he sent for the chiefs of the Roman synagogues which were very numerous.<sup>1</sup> How, it may be thought, could an unknown Jew entering Rome venture to summon the heads of the Jewish community, many of them men of wealth and position? But, then, we must remember that St. Paul was no ordinary Jew from the point of view taken by Roman society. He had arrived in Rome a state prisoner, and he was a Roman citizen of Jewish birth, and this at once gave him position entitling

<sup>1</sup> See for proof of this Harnack's article in the *Princeton Review*, quoted above.



him to a certain amount of consideration. St. Paul told his story to these chief men of the Jews, the local Sanhedrin perhaps, recounted the bad treatment he had received at the hands of the Jews of Jerusalem, and indicated the character of his teaching which he wished to expound to them. "For this cause therefore did I entreat you to see and speak with me : for because of the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain," emphasizing the Hope of Israel, or their Messianic expectation, as the cause of his imprisonment, exactly as he had done some months before when pleading before King Agrippa (ch. xxvi. 6, 7, 22, 23). Having thus briefly indicated his desires, the Jewish council intimated that no communication had been made to them from Jerusalem about St. Paul. It may have been that his lengthened imprisonment at Cæsarea had caused the Sanhedrin to relax their vigilance, though we see that their hostility still continued as bitter as ever when Festus arrived in Jerusalem and afterwards led to St. Paul's appeal ; or perhaps they had not had time to forward a communication from the Jerusalem Sanhedrin to the Jewish authorities at Rome ; or perhaps, which is the most likely of all, they thought it useless to prosecute their suit before Nero, who would scoff at the real charges which dealt merely with questions of Jewish customs, and which imperial lawyers therefore would regard as utterly unworthy the imprisonment or death of a Roman citizen. At any rate the Jewish council gave him a hearing, when St. Paul followed exactly the same lines as in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia and in his speech before Agrippa. He pointed out the gradual development of God's purposes in the law and the prophets, showing how they had been all fulfilled in Jesus Christ. It was with the



Jews at Rome as with the Jews elsewhere. Some believed and some believed not as Paul preached unto them. The meeting was much more one for discussion than for addresses. From morning till evening the disputation continued, till at last the Apostle dismissed them with the stern words of the Prophet Isaiah, taken from the sixth chapter of his prophecy, where he depicts the hopeless state of those who obstinately close their ears to the voice of conviction. But the Jews of Rome do not seem to have been like those of Thessalonica, Ephesus, Corinth, and Jerusalem in one respect. They did not actively oppose St. Paul or attempt to silence him by violent means, for the last glimpse we get of the Apostle in St. Luke's narrative is this: "He abode two whole years in his own hired dwelling, and received all that went in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, none forbidding him."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The various biographies of the Apostle, and specially that of Conybeare & Howson, follow the Apostle's history in great detail during these two years; but the story of that period more properly falls under the consideration of the writers upon the Epistles of the Captivity than of one dealing with the Acts of the Apostles. If I were to discuss St. Paul's life at Rome I should have simply to borrow all my details from these Epistles. The abruptness of St. Luke's termination of his narrative is very noteworthy, and the best proof of the early date of the Acts. I do not think I need add anything to Dr. Salmon's argument on this point contained in the following words, which I take from chap. xviii. of his *Introduction*: "To my mind the simplest explanation why St. Luke has told us no more is, that he knew no more; and that he knew no more, because at the time nothing more had happened—in other words, that the book of the Acts was written a little more than two years after Paul's arrival in Rome."



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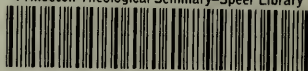
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